



The London magazine



THE LONDON MAGAZINE.

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IMPORTANT NOTICE.

There are two items in this number of the "London Magazine" to which the Editor begs to draw the particular attention of his readers. The first is a **SKILL CONTEST** announced on page 104, which cannot fail to provide an interesting occupation for all who enter the lists, while to a large number it must inevitably be a source of considerable profit. The first prize in this contest, it will be observed, is no less a sum than £500--payable in cash.

The second item is a dramatic New Novel (starting on page 107) by the Authors of those famous romances, "Convict 99," "In the Shadow of Guilt," "The Story of a Great Sin," etc., etc. This story, which will be the length of an ordinary six shilling novel, will be completed in three parts, *i.e.*, the February, March, and April issues of the "London Magazine."

It should be mentioned that to provide space for these additional attractions, this issue has been specially enlarged, so that the usual features are in no way encroached upon.



So, unpropitiously, my acquaintance with Mr. Skelmersdale began.

Well, I got from that to confidence—through a series of toilsome efforts. I picked him up again in the Village Room, where of a night I went to play billiards after my supper, and mitigate the extreme seclusion from my kind that was so helpful to work during the day. I contrived to play with him and afterwards to talk with him. I found the one subject to avoid was Fairyland. On everything else he was open and amiable in a commonplace sort of way, but on that he had been worried—it was a manifest taboo. Only once in the room did I hear the slightest allusion to his experience in his presence, and that was by a cross-grained farm hand who was losing to him. Skelmersdale had run a break into double figures, which, by the Bignor standards, was uncommonly good play. “Steady on!” said his adversary. “None of your fairy flukes!”

Skelmersdale stared at him for a moment, cue in hand, then flung it down and walked out of the room.

“Why can’t you leave ’im alone?” said a respectable elder who had been enjoying the game, and in the general murmur of disapproval, the grin of satisfied wit faded from the ploughboy’s face.

I scented my opportunity. “What’s this joke,” said I, “about Fairyland?”

“Tain’t no joke about Fairyland, not to young Skelmersdale,” said the respectable elder, drinking.

A little man with rosy cheeks was more communicative. “They *do* say, sir,” he said, “that they took him into Aldington Knoll an’ kep’ him there a matter of three weeks.”

And with that the gathering was well under weigh. Once one sheep had started others were ready enough to follow, and in a little time I had at least the exterior aspect of the Skelmersdale affair. Formerly, before he came to Bignor, he had been in that very similar little shop at Aldington Corner, and there it was that whatever it was did happen had taken place. The story was clear that he had stayed out late one night on the Knoll and vanished for three weeks from the sight of men, and had returned with “his cuffs as clean as when he started,” and his pockets full of dust and ashes. He returned in a state of moody wretchedness that only slowly passed away, and for many days he would give no account of where it was he had been. The girl he was engaged to at

Clapton Hill tried to get it out of him and threw him over partly because he refused, and partly because, as she said, he fairly gave her the “’ump.” And then when, some time after, he let out to someone carelessly that he had been in Fairyland and wanted to go back, and when the thing spread and the simple badinage of the countryside came into play, he threw up his situation abruptly, and came to Bignor to get out of the fuss. But as to what had happened in Fairyland none of these people knew. There the gathering in the Village Room went to pieces like a pack at fault. One said this, and another said that.

Their air in dealing with this marvel was ostensibly critical and sceptical, but I could see a considerable amount of belief showing through their guarded qualifications. I took a line of intelligent interest, tinged with a reasonable doubt of the whole story.

“If Fairyland’s inside Aldington Knoll,” I said, “why don’t you dig it out?”

“That’s what I says,” said the young ploughboy.

“There’s a-many have tried to dig on Aldington Knoll,” said the respectable elder, solemnly, “one time and another. But there’s none as goes about to-day to tell what they got by digging.”

The unanimity of vague belief that surrounded me was rather impressive; I felt there must surely be *something* at the root of so much conviction, and the already pretty keen curiosity I felt about the real facts of the case was distinctly whetted. If these real facts were to be got from anyone they were to be got from Skelmersdale himself, and I set myself, therefore, still more assiduously to efface my bad first impression and win his confidence to the pitch of voluntary speech. In that endeavour I had a social advantage. Being a person of affability and no apparent employment, and wearing tweeds and knickerbockers, I was naturally classed as an artist in Bignor, and in the remarkable code of social precedence prevalent in Bignor an artist ranks considerably higher than a grocer’s assistant. Skelmersdale, like too many of his class, is something of a snob; he had told me to “SHUT it” only under sudden, excessive provocation, and with, I am certain, a subsequent repentance; he was, I knew, quite glad to be seen walking about the village with me. In due course, he accepted the proposal of a pipe and whisky in my rooms readily enough, and there, scenting by some happy instinct



that there was trouble of the heart in this, and knowing that confidences beget confidences, I plied him with much of interest and suggestion from my real and fictitious past. And it was after the third whisky of the third visit of that sort, if I remember rightly, that *à propos* of some artless expansion of a little affair that had touched and left me in my teens, that he did at last of his own free will and motion break the ice. "It was like that with me," he said, "over there at Aldington. It's just that that's so rum. First I didn't care a bit and it was all her, and afterwards when it was too late, it was, in a manner of speaking, all me."

I forbore to jump upon this allusion, and so he presently threw out another, and in a little while he was making it as plain as daylight that the one thing he wanted to talk about now was this Fairyland adventure he had sat tight upon for so long. You see, I'd done the trick with him, and from being just another half-incredulous, would-be facetious stranger, I had, by all my wealth of shameless self-exposure, become the possible confidant. He had been bitten by the desire to show that he, too, had lived and felt many things, and the fever was upon him.

He was certainly confoundedly allusive at first, and my eagerness to clear him up with a few precise questions was only equalled and controlled by my anxiety not to get to this sort of thing too soon. But in another meeting or so the basis of confidence was complete, and from first to last I think I got most items and aspects, indeed, I got quite a number of times over almost everything that Mr. Skelmersdale, with his very limited powers of narration, will ever be able to tell. And so I come to the story of his adventure, and I piece it all together again. Whether it really happened, whether he imagined it or dreamt it, or fell upon it in some strange hallucinatory trance, I do not profess to say. But that he invented it I will not for one moment entertain. The man simply and honestly believes the thing happened as he says it happened, he is transparently incapable of any lie so elaborate and sustained, and in the belief of the simple, yet often keenly penetrating, rustic minds about him I find a very strong confirmation of his sincerity. He believes—and nobody can produce any positive fact to falsify his belief. As for me, with this much of endorsement, I transmit his story—I am a little old now to justify or explain.

He says he went to sleep on Aldington Knoll about ten o'clock one night—it was quite possibly Midsummer night, though he has never thought of the date, and he cannot be sure within a week or so—and it was a fine night and windless, with a rising moon. I have been at the pains to visit this Knoll thrice since his story grew up under my persuasions, and once I went there in the twilight summer moonrise on what was, perhaps, a similar night to that of his adventure. Jupiter was great and splendid above the moon, and in the north and north-west the sky was green and vividly bright over the sunken sun. The Knoll stands out bare and bleak under the sky, but surrounded at a little distance by dark thickets, and as I went up towards it there was a mighty starting and scampering of ghostly or quite invisible rabbits. Just over the crown of the Knoll, but nowhere else, was a multitudinous thin trumpeting of midges. The Knoll is, I believe, an artificial mound, the tumulus of some great prehistoric chieftain, and surely no man ever chose a more spacious prospect for a sepulchre. Eastward one sees along the hills to Hythe, and thence across the Channel to where, thirty miles and more, perhaps, away, the great white lights by Gris Nez and Boulogne wink and pass and shine. Westward lies the whole tumbled valley of the Weald, visible as far as Hindhead and Leith Hill, and the valley of the Stour opens the Downs in the north to interminable hills beyond Wye. All Romney Marsh lies southward at one's feet, Dymchurch and Romney and Lydd, Hastings and its hill are in the middle distance, and the hills multiply vaguely far beyond where Eastbourne rolls up to Beachy Head.

And out upon all this it was that Skelmersdale wandered, being troubled in his earlier love affair, and as he says, "not caring *where* he went." And there he sat down to think it over, and so, sulking and grieving, was overtaken by sleep. And so he fell into the fairies' power.

The quarrel that had upset him was some trivial matter enough between himself and the girl at Clapton Hill to whom he was engaged. She was a farmer's daughter, said Skelmersdale, and "very respectable," and no doubt an excellent match for him, but both girl and lover were very young and with just that mutual jealousy, that intolerantly keen edge of criticism, that irrational hunger



the sky is hidden, it seems. Except for one night when the fairies were dancing, Mr. Skelmersdale, during all his time with them, never saw a star. And of that night I am in doubt whether he was in Fairyland proper or out where the rings and rushes are, in those low meadows near the railway line at S.neeth.

But it was light under these trees for all that, and on the leaves and amidst the turf shone a multitude of glow-worms, very bright and fine. And Mr. Skelmersdale's first impression was that he was *small*, and the next that quite a number of people still smaller were standing all about him. For some reason, he says, he was neither surprised nor frightened, but sat up quite deliberately and rubbed the sleep out of his eyes. And there all about him stood the smiling elves who had caught him sleeping under their privileges and had brought him into Fairyland.

What these elves were like I have failed to gather, so vague and imperfect is his vocabulary, and so unobservant of all minor detail does he seem to have been. They were clothed in something very light and beautiful, that was neither wool, nor silk, nor leaves, nor the petals of flowers. They stood all about him as he sat and waked, and down the glade towards him, down a glow-worm avenue and fronted by a star, came at once that Fairy Lady who is the chief personage of his memory and tale. Of her I gathered more. She was clothed in filmy green, and about her little waist was a broad silver girdle. Her hair waved back from her forehead on either side; there were curls not too wayward and yet astray, and on her brow was a little tiara, set with a single star. Her sleeves were some sort of open sleeves that gave little glimpses of her arms; her throat, I think, was a little open, because he speaks of the beauty of her neck and chin. There was a necklace of coral about her white throat, and in her breast a coral-coloured flower. She had the soft lines of a little child in her chin and cheeks and throat. And her eyes, I gather, were of a kindled brown, very soft and straight and sweet under her level brows. You see by these particulars how greatly this lady must have loomed in Mr. Skelmersdale's picture. Certain things he tried to express and could not express; "the way she moved," he said several times; and I fancy a sort of demure joyousness radiated from this Lady.

And it was in the company of this delightful person, as the guest and chosen companion of this delightful person, that Mr. Skelmersdale set out to be taken into the intimacies of Fairyland. She welcomed him gladly and a little warmly—I suspect a pressure of his hand in both of hers and a lit face to his. After all, ten years ago young Skelmersdale may have been a very comely youth. And once she took his arm, and once, I think, she led him by the hand adown the glade that the glow-worms lit.

Just how things chanced and happened there is no telling from Mr. Skelmersdale's disarticulated skeleton of description. He gives little unsatisfactory glimpses of strange corners and doings, of places where there were many fairies together, of "toadstool things that shone pink," of fairy food, of which he could only say "you should have tasted it!" and of fairy music, "like a little musical box," that came out of nodding flowers. There was a great open place where fairies rode and raced on "things," but what Mr. Skelmersdale meant by "these here things they rode," there is no telling. Larvæ, perhaps, or crickets, or the little beetles that elude us so abundantly. There was a place where water splashed and gigantic king-cups grew, and there in the hotter times the fairies bathed together. There were games being played and dancing and much elvish love-making, too, I think, among the moss branch thickets. There can be no doubt that the Fairy Lady made love to Mr. Skelmersdale, and no doubt either that this young man set himself to resist her. A time came, indeed, when she sat on a bank beside him, in a quiet secluded place "all smelling of v'lets," and talked to him of love.

"When her voice went low and she whispered," said Mr. Skelmersdale, "and laid 'er 'and on my 'and, you know, and came close with a soft, warm friendly way she 'ad, it was as much as I could do to keep my 'ead."

It seems he kept his head to a certain limited unfortunate extent. He saw "ow the wind was blowing," he says, and so, sitting there in a place all smelling of violets, with the touch of this lovely Fairy Lady about him, Mr. Skelmersdale broke it to her gently—that he was engaged!

She had told him she loved him dearly, that he was a sweet human lad for her, and whatever he would ask of her he should have—even his heart's desire.



"And," said Mr. Skelmersdale, "like a fool, I did."

There are kisses and kisses, I am told, and this must have been quite the other sort from Millie's resonant signals of regard. There was something magic in that kiss, assuredly it marked a turning point. At any rate, this is one of the passages that he thought sufficiently important to describe most at length. I have tried to get it right, I have tried to disentangle it from the hints and gestures through which it came to me, but I have no doubt that it was all different from my telling and far finer and sweeter, in the soft filtered light and the subtly stirring silences of the fairy glades. The Fairy Lady asked him more about Millie, and was she very lovely, and so on—a great many times. As to Millie's loveliness, I conceive him answering that she was "all right." And then, or on some such occasion, the Fairy Lady told him she had fallen in love with him as he slept in the moonlight, and so he had been brought into Fairyland, and she had thought, not knowing of Millie, that perhaps he might chance to love her. "But now you know you can't," she said, "so you must stop with me just a little while, and then you must go back to Millie." She told him that, and you know Skelmersdale was already in love with her, but the pure inertia of his mind kept him in the way he was going. I imagine him sitting in a sort of stupefaction amidst all these glowing beautiful things, answering about his Millie and the little shop he projected and the need of a horse and cart. . . . And that absurd state of affairs must have gone on for days and days. I see this little lady, hovering about him and trying to amuse him, too dainty to understand his complexity and too tender to let him go. And he, you know, hypnotised as it were by his earthly position, went his way with her hither and thither, blind to everything in Fairyland but this wonderful intimacy that had come to him. It is hard, it is impossible, to give in print the effect of her radiant sweetness shining through the jungle of poor Skelmersdale's rough and broken sentences. To me, at least, she shone clear amidst the muddle of his story like a glow-worm in a tangle of weeds.

There must have been many days of things while all this was happening—and once, I say, they danced under the moonlight in the fairy rings that stud the meadows near Smeeth—but at last it all came to an end.

She led him into a great cavernous place, lit by "a red nightlight sort of thing," where there were coffers piled on coffers, and cups and golden boxes, and a great heap of what certainly seemed to all Mr. Skelmersdale's senses—coined gold. There were little gnomes amidst this wealth, who saluted her at her coming, and stood aside. And suddenly she turned on him there with brightly shining eyes.

"And now," she said, "you have been kind to stay with me so long, and it is time I let you go. You must go back to your Millie. You must go back to your Millie, and here—just as I promised you—they will give you gold."

"She choked like," said Mr. Skelmersdale. "At that, I had a sort of feeling——" (he touched his breastbone) "as though I was fainting here. I felt pale, you know, and shivering, and even then—I 'adn't a thing to say."

He paused. "Yes," I said.

The scene was beyond his describing. But I know that she kissed him good-bye.

"And you said nothing?"

"Nothing," he said. "I stood like a stuffed calf. She just looked back once, you know, and stood smiling like and crying—I could see the shine of her eyes—and then she was gone, and there was all these little fellows bustling about me, stuffing my 'ands and my pockets and the back of my collar and everywhere with gold."

And then it was, when the Fairy Lady had vanished, that Mr. Skelmersdale really understood and knew. He suddenly began plucking out the gold they were thrusting upon him, and shouting out at them to prevent their giving him more. "'I don't *want* yer gold,' I said. 'I 'aven't done yet. I'm not going. I want to speak to that Fairy Lady again.' I started off to go after her and they held me back. Yes, stuck their little 'ands against my middle and shoved me back. They kept giving me more and more gold until it was running all down my trouser legs and dropping out of my 'ands. 'I don't *want* yer gold,' I says to them, 'I want just to speak to the Fairy Lady again.'"

"And did you?"

"It came to a tussle."

"Before you saw her?"

"I didn't see her. When I got out from them she wasn't anywhere to be seen."

So he ran in search of her out of this red-lit cave, down a long grotto seeking her, and



pallor of dawn and a chilly wind were coming up together. He could have believed the whole thing a strangely vivid dream until he thrust his hand into his side pocket and found it stuffed with ashes. Then he knew for certain it was fairy gold they had given him. He could feel all their pinches and pricks still, though there was never a bruise upon him. And in that manner, and so suddenly, Mr. Skelmersdale came out of Fairyland back into this world of men. Even then he fancied the thing was but the matter of a night until he returned to the shop at Aldington Corner and discovered amidst their astonishment that he had been away three weeks.

"Lor! the trouble I 'ad!" said Mr. Skelmersdale.

"How?"

"Explaining. I suppose you've never had anything like that to explain."

"Never," I said, and he expatiated for a time on the behaviour of this person and that. One name he avoided for a space.

"And Millie?" said I at last.

"I didn't seem to care a bit for seeing Millie," he said.

"I expect she seemed changed?"

"Everyone was changed. Changed for good. Everyone seemed big, you know, and coarse. And their voices seemed loud. Why, the sun, when it rose in the morning, fair hit me in the eye!"

"And Millie?"

"I didn't want to see Millie."

"And when you did?"

"I came up against her Sunday, coming out of church. 'Where you been?' she said, and I saw there was a row. I didn't care if there was. I seemed to forget about her even while she was there a-talking to me. She was just nothing. I couldn't make out whatever I 'ad seen in 'er ever, or what there could 'ave been. Sometimes when she wasn't about, I did get back a little, but never when she was there. Then it was always the other came up and blotted her out. . . . Any'ow, it didn't break her heart."

"Married?" I asked.

"Married 'er cousin," said Mr. Skelmersdale, and reflected on the pattern of the tablecloth for a space.

When he spoke again it was clear that his former sweetheart had clean vanished from

his mind, and that the talk had brought back the Fairy Lady triumphant in his heart. He talked of her—soon he was letting out the oddest things, queer love secrets it would be treachery to repeat. I think, indeed, that was the queerest thing in the whole affair, to hear that neat little grocer man after his story was done, with a glass of whisky beside him and a cigar between his fingers, witnessing, with sorrow still, though now, indeed, with a time-blunted anguish, of the inappeasable hunger of the heart that presently came upon him. "I couldn't eat," he said, "I couldn't sleep. I made mistakes in orders and got mixed with change. There she was day and night, drawing me and drawing me. Oh, I wanted her. Lord! how I wanted her! I was up there, most evenings I was up there on the Knoll, often even when it rained. I used to walk over the Knoll and round it and round it, calling for them to let me in. Shouting. Near blubbering I was at times. Daft I was and miserable. I kept on saying it was all a mistake. And every Sunday afternoon I went up there, wet and fine, though I knew as well as you do it wasn't no good by day. And I've tried to go to sleep there."

He stopped sharply and decided to drink some whisky.

"I've tried to go to sleep there," he said, and I could swear his lips trembled. "I've tried to go to sleep there, often and often. And, you know, I couldn't, sir—never. I've thought if I could go to sleep there, there might be something. . . . But I've sat up there and laid up there, and I couldn't—not for thinking and longing. It's the longing. . . . I've tried——"

He blew, drank up the rest of his whisky spasmodically, stood up suddenly and buttoned his jacket, staring closely and critically at the cheap oleographs beside the mantel meanwhile. The little black notebook in which he recorded the orders of his daily round projected stiffly from his breast pocket. When all the buttons were quite done, he patted his chest and turned on me suddenly. "Well," he said, "I must be going."

There was something in his eyes and manner that were too difficult for him to express in words. "One gets talking," he said at last at the door, and smiled wanly, and so vanished from my eyes. And that is the tale of Mr. Skelmersdale in Fairyland just as he told it to me.





















THE STORY OF HOW I MET MELISSA.

By PERCY E. REINGANUM.

Illustrated by T. H. ROBINSON.

IT was raining hard when I left "the office," and I was feeling rather low-spirited at the prospect of spending the evening in solitude at my cheerless Kilburn diggings. To brace my jaded frame I thereupon decided on a little harmless dissipation, and instead of my usual species of "high tea" at an "Aerated," resolved to indulge in a little dinner at Frascati's, and sit and listen to the band for an hour afterwards. I had half-a-sovereign in the purse at the end of my watch-chain, and I felt I could afford the extravagance. As I stood in the doorway I remembered that, half-an-hour previously, I had lent watch, chain, purse and all to young Applebee, to save detaching the key, which he needed to wind up his watch. Young Applebee is an incorrigible joker, and it occurred to me that he might have abstracted the coin for fun; I flicked open the sovereign-purse and comforted myself by the yellow gleam of metal therein, under the light of a street-lamp.

If it had been fine I should have walked to Oxford Street. As it was a pouring wet night, I sprang on to a passing 'bus. It was nearly full, and I had an uncomfortable half-minute falling over other people's feet and getting entangled in their wet umbrellas, before I reached a seat at the far end. Then I raised my eyes and found myself opposite a young lady whom I instantly considered, and still consider, the most charming young lady I have ever seen.

She was sitting next to a spruce little elderly gentleman and an equally spruce little elderly lady, whom I heard her address as "uncle" and "aunt" respectively. I

was so taken up with her, and so engrossed in watching her out of the corners of my eyes, that it was some time before I realised that the conductor was standing on my right foot, demanding my fare with surly gruffness.

He was very surly and very gruff: most conductors I have met have been amiable, but this one was an exception. He grew audibly impatient as I fumbled for a copper in my ticket pocket. I found I had no coppers. I extended my investigations to my trouser-pockets, a difficult operation in a crowded 'bus. The conductor's unconcealed restiveness made me hot and nervous, and my uneasiness increased when I discovered that I had no silver either. I felt as though every passenger in that 'bus was watching my struggles—especially the young lady, the elderly lady and the elderly gentleman opposite. At last I gave it up.

"I've got no coppers," I said. "I'm afraid I've nothing less than half-a-sovereign. Can you change it?"

I fingered my sovereign-purse as I spoke and looked up at him appealingly.

"No, I can't!" he retorted roughly.

I was feeling too depressed to argue the matter.

"Then I'll get off," I said.

He retreated to make room for me, and I rose with a doleful glance at the streaming rain. Then the little elderly gentleman opposite touched my arm.

"May I ask how far you're going?" he said in a sharp staccato voice.

"Frascati's," I answered, taken by surprise. "That is—to Tottenham Court Road."

"So are we!" he returned in the same jerky way. "All right. I'll pay your fare. You can change that half-sovereign when we get off and give me back my penny."

"I'm really very much obliged to you, sir," I said, and sank back into my seat. He nodded and paid the surly conductor, the little elderly lady smiled approval very kindly, and the young lady smiled, too. I felt less depressed and smiled back. I intended to convey gratitude by my smile, and hope I succeeded.

He was a chatty little gentleman, and we were soon deep in an amicable discussion of the merits or demerits (I forget which!) of Mr. Chamberlain. I agreed with all he said, and felt rewarded by an occasional look, or

"Catch me waiting in the rain for a penny—like a blind beggar," he said with a chuckle. "Didn't you mention Frascati's?"

I said I did.

"Well, we were thinking of having a bit of something to eat there ourselves. You might wait till you pay for your dinner to get out of debt with me. Eh?"

I jumped at the idea. My spirits had dropped at the prospect of an immediate parting, now they revived magically. I looked at the young lady; she seemed pleased. When she seems pleased she is more charming than ever.

We all entered the restaurant together. I was wondering how near them I could sit without seeming intrusive when the little



The conductor's unconcealed restiveness made me hot and nervous.

word, or smile, from the charming young lady beside him. We were still talking when the 'bus stopped at my destination—and theirs. I got out first and assisted the ladies to alight.

"If you can wait a moment, sir," I said, "I can get change and discharge my little obligation."

elderly gentleman settled that point by saying:

"Here you are. Here's a table. Just room for four comfortably," and there I was actually sitting opposite the young lady with her aunt and uncle on either hand, as though I'd known the family for years!

Something like that idea seemed to strike him, too.

"Allow me—my card," he said solemnly, handing me one. I read, "Mr. Jasper Mandeville," and an address in Bayswater. I reciprocated by telling him my name and apologising for not having a card on me.

"That's all right," he said comfortably. "This is my wife, Mrs. Mandeville." I bowed. "My niece, Miss Melissa Mandeville." I bowed again and she blushed. "And now we know one another and can eat our dinners with clear consciences."

I exerted myself to the utmost to make myself agreeable. I told all the anecdotes I could think of, and asked most of the riddles I could remember. I did a great many silly things with the intention of making them laugh, and a good many more with no intention at all. One of the latter was to order macaroni. I am fond of macaroni, but it is hardly the dish to choose when one is desirous of making a graceful and elegant impression upon new acquaintances. I felt them watching me at every mouthful, and grew hot and nervous. Then my eyes met those of Miss Melissa Mandeville and I felt better.

"Awkward thing—not having any change in a 'bus," said her uncle presently when the conversation flagged.

"Especially on such a dreadful evening," said her aunt.

"It was very good of you to come to my rescue," I said. "Most people would have taken no notice."

"Most people are more careful," retorted the little elderly gentleman. "Most people might have thought it was a dodge."

"My dear sir," I protested.

"Oh, uncle!" said Miss Melissa.

"All right, my lad, all right," said Mr. Mandeville with a chuckle, "but one does have to be careful nowadays."

I felt rather ruffled, however, and was less cordial towards him during the rest of the meal. But I was grateful to his niece for her indignant exclamation, and we got on capitally. I addressed my conversation to her and her aunt, rather ignoring the gentleman. He grew rather cooler in his manner towards me, but I foolishly took no notice. I felt annoyed at his insinuation.

At last Mrs. Mandeville glanced at the clock and began putting on her gloves. We had all finished. The uncle called "Waiter!" and that obsequious foreigner approached.

"All togezzer, sare?" he enquired, with a wave of his hand.

"No," I said hastily, "mine separately," and Mr. Mandeville grunted assent.

I glanced at my bill as it lay on the plate at my elbow, while her uncle examined his closely through his eye-glasses; then I slipped that solitary coin out of my purse and spun it on to the plate. Mr. Mandeville was still poring over the items of his account, so the waiter picked up my money and bill and turned away.

I leaned forward and began to ask Miss Melissa if she objected to my lighting a cigarette, when I felt the waiter beside me again. I expected him to count out my change on the table, but he didn't.

"I beg your pardon," he said.

"Well?" I looked up surprised.

"Zis money, sare," he went on, and set the plate on the table again.

"What about it?" I asked impatiently. It lay on the plate just where I had thrown it, and as I looked at it I gasped.

It was not a half-sovereign. It was a farthing — an ordinary bronze farthing burnished to an illusory pitch of golden brightness. That unutterable idiot Applebee must have substituted it "for a joke," intending no doubt to give me my half-sovereign back next day. And here I was, without another "red cent" in my pocket, in the company of comparative strangers to whom I was already indebted for a 'bus ride, with a restaurant bill for four-and-threepence,—and the magnificent sum of one farthing wherewith to pay the same.

To say I longed for the earth to open and swallow me would give only a very mild idea of my feelings. I yearned for a volcanic eruption, a dynamite explosion, a revolution. The room, the lights, the Mandevilles and the waiter all whirled round and round, making me sick and dizzy. All sorts of desperate expedients rushed through my mind, of which diving through the glass screen and bolting into the street was the most feasible. Then I became aware that the Mandevilles had risen to their feet, that Mr. Mandeville had settled his bill, and was now addressing me.

"It won't do!" he was saying, "I'm too old a bird, my young friend. I don't mind writing off that 'bus fare—a penny won't break me, I daresay; but this is carrying it a little too far."

"You are quite mistaken, sir," I began miserably.

"Very likely," he sneered, "or I *was*—which is more likely. I've heard of this game before. My dears"—to his wife and niece—"if you're quite ready——"

I made a last desperate attempt.

"It's all due to a joke," I said, but he cut me short.

"I'm afraid I don't see the point," he retorted; "we'll leave you to enjoy it by yourself. Good-day to you."

"I will fetch zee manager," he replied, and vanished.

I sat still and stared despondently at the tablecloth. Then I suddenly noticed a pair of gloves lying beside the plate opposite me. *Her* gloves! I stretched out my hand to pick them up, when I was aware of a presence by my side. I looked up, and she herself stood before me. She was flushed and breathless as though from running.

"I—I forgot my gloves—that is, I left them here. Oh, thank you. And—and I



"It won't do! I'm too old a bird, my young friend."

He turned on his heel and marched off. The ladies followed him slowly. I dared not raise my eyes, but I felt somehow that they regarded me less unkindly than he did.

The waiter recalled me to my senses.

"Zee bill," he said, a good deal less obsequiously than before.

I roused myself.

"I'm very sorry," I said, "but owing to an accident I find I've no money about me."

don't believe—you know, what uncle said And I'm ever so sorry about it, and I hope it'll be all right. Good-bye, they're waiting for me."

She held out her hand, and I stumbled to my feet and pressed it gratefully. I couldn't speak. Then she went out and I sank back in my chair, gloomily. She was gone, and I should never see her again; and there was an unpleasant interview with the manager in the immediate future.

At that moment something caught my eye—a small bright coin lying just where her gloves had been. Breathlessly I picked it up; it was a half-sovereign—a real golden half-sovereign. I stared at it, half afraid it might suddenly change into a farthing. But it didn't; and then it flashed across my mind that she must have left it there when she picked up her gloves.

I told the manager when he arrived, frowning, that I had found it in my waistcoat pocket, and he retired, smiling. I paid the apologetic waiter. Mr. Mandeville's card lay on the table. I picked it up, slipped it into my pocket together with that fateful farthing, and went home with a light heart.

I had a row with young Applebee the next day. Without going into details I told him that his infernal joke had nearly landed me in a serious mess, and that he had nearly ruined my reputation. He laughed at me, and made rude and unnecessary remarks about my reputation, but he gave me back my half-sovereign. And that evening I set out to restore it to its fair owner. I had gathered that she was an orphan living with her aunt and uncle, so I made for the address on the latter's card.

I found it after some little trouble—a prim, elderly-looking house, very like its owner. A prim, elderly maid-servant answered my knock and showed me into a comfortably furnished room. I had asked for Miss Mandeville, and she took my name and vanished.

After a few minutes' waiting the door opened, and in walked not only Miss Mandeville, but her uncle also.

"Oh, it *is* you!" was the latter's greeting.

I said "Good evening," as politely as I could.

"Well, and what may you want?" he asked.

"I want to say a word to your niece," I replied. I glanced at her as I spoke, and she smiled and nodded encouragement.

Mr. Mandeville was astonished. "Well, upon my word!" he exclaimed. "Go on, then—say it."

"It concerns only herself," I answered with dignity. "I wish to return something of hers she left behind last night."

I drew the coin from my waistcoat pocket and pressed it into the hand she extended.

Mr. Mandeville turned on his niece.

"Melissa!" he ejaculated, "you—you lent him——"

"Yes, uncle," she answered defiantly, "and you see I was right to trust him."

He drew a long breath and turned to me. "These girls nowadays!" he said feebly. "Well, Mr. What's-your-name, I suppose I misjudged you. I'm sorry for what I said," and he held out his hand.

I grasped it warmly. Was he not her uncle? "It's all settled now," I said heartily, "and here's your penny."

He chuckled. "You're terribly honest," he said. "I'd almost forgotten it." But I'm sure he hadn't!

I left the house on very good terms with them and myself, and promised to come and see them again "one day."

When I was going to bed that night I turned my pockets out on the dressing-table, and there, amongst their other contents, shone that farthing.

"You've brought me good luck after all," I said to it, and then stopped short. It was not a farthing, but a half-sovereign. And I couldn't find the farthing anywhere. I had refused to give it back to Applebee. And then it suddenly dawned upon me what I had done. I had given it to Melissa—Miss Mandeville!

I burst out laughing. Should I never be able to put matters right? Was I always to be haunted by that confounded coin? Then I grew serious. Perhaps after all she would think I was trying to cheat her. At any rate, I should not be easy until I had once and for all settled my debt.

So the following evening—Saturday—saw me once more at the Mandevilles' abode. This time I was ushered straight into a room where they were all sitting together—her aunt, her uncle and she herself.

"Bless my soul!" said Mr. Mandeville, "here he is again. Why, it must be twenty-four hours at least since we saw you."

He was good-naturedly sarcastic, and was evidently inclined to be genial. Mrs. Mandeville, too, seemed pleased to see me. Melissa was doing fancy work, and her head was bent, but I fancied she was laughing.

"I made another mistake last night," I said, taking the bull by the horns. "Here is Miss Mandeville's half-sovereign. I apologise very sincerely." I laid the coin on the table.

"Why, Melissa," said her uncle, "what was it he gave you yesterday?"

So she hadn't told him! She had believed in me all the same. We all laughed very

heartily about it, and I spent a very pleasant evening—very pleasant indeed. When I said “Good-bye,” I remembered that on the morrow—Sunday—I should be dining in

I told him my prospects for the morrow.
“What, all alone? Look here, my boy, come along to us,” he replied, genially.

* * *



“I don’t believe—you know, what uncle said. I hope it will be all right.”

solitary state in my lonely bachelor diggings, and I suddenly felt very sad.

I suppose I showed it in my face, for uncle suddenly asked “Where are you spending Sunday?”

Well, well; that’s all some time ago now. But that was the beginning of it. That’s how it is I am now engaged to Miss Melissa Mandeville, and why I wear an ordinary-looking farthing on my watch-chain.



















roar of laughter, in which all joined except the deluded scholar and the master, greeted this extraordinary answer, and the sequel was a very stiff imposition.

It has been asserted, and not inadequately so, that an actor is akin to an author. At all events, some of our celebrated dramatic performers would never have reached their several stars of ascendancy, had it not been for the existence of poets and prose writers who supplied the material which they have reproduced in mock-reality. When we speak of the school-days of John Henry Brodribb, who afterwards became and still remains the greatest actor of the day, we shall at the same time be bringing before the public some interesting reminiscences of a period when neither Sir Henry, nor even Mr. Irving existed, as far as name or notoriety is concerned.

Mrs. Brodribb, anxious that her boy should breathe the fresh air of her native Cornwall, took him from Keinton, near Glastonbury, where he was born, when he was little more than a baby, to her sister, Mrs. Penberthy, who lived at Helston, which is now a rising town, situated a few miles north of the Lizard. In those days it was quite a small village, but young Irving enjoyed the best education it afforded, and, when at his aunt's home, had the run of a select, but not extensive, library, which comprised the Bible, Don Quixote, and a copy of the old English Ballads. He went to Helston at the age of four and remained there till he was eleven.

Concerning the early days of Lord Kitchener, few anecdotes or interesting particulars have survived, but, as Horace G. Groser describes it in his excellent biography, "many a little reminiscence must be stored up in the mind of one person at least, the nurse of his childhood—the one woman in all the world, as it has been cynically said, whom he really loves." One anecdote, indeed, of the Sirdar's early school-days has survived. His father, who, as befitted a soldier, had very clear ideas about the value of discipline, mental as well as bodily, noticed the growing habit of his son occupying himself with passing fancies instead of his books. Thereupon he told the boy that if he did not pass his forthcoming examination at the private school he was attending, he would be made to take his place with the "kids" of a neighbouring "dame school." As the

boy did not pass, he was, to his horror, sent there, with the additional threat that another failure would result in his being apprenticed to a hatter.

But the punishment was bitter enough to the boy, and having once learned the lesson, he has since then been himself as unrelentlessly unsparing to the failures in the great school of arms, where he is now a master.

Herbert Kitchener as a boy, says another correspondent, was quiet and taciturn, good at books, but occupied an indifferent place in out-door games and gymnastics. And yet another remembers him as a shy, self-contained boy who early showed a talent for figures. It has been asserted that Lord Kitchener was an old Wellington boy. He was never at Wellington. Another report places him at Harrow under Dr. Butler, now Master of Trinity, Cambridge, but Dr. Butler has denied this himself. Young Kitchener left Ireland at the age of thirteen and went abroad to Grand Clos Villeneuve, where he remained for a period under the Rev. J. Bennett. He was later sent to a crammer in London, the Rev. G. Frost, and from his hands he passed to the Royal Academy, Woolwich. Mr. Frost lived to see his pupil famous. His death took place when his former pupil was winning laurels in the Soudan, and under the old man's pillow was found a letter from Lord Kitchener, thanking him for the congratulations he had sent.

Admiral Nelson, the most renowned of English naval heroes, was born at Burnham Thorpe in Norfolk, and educated at North Walsham Grammar School, which was founded in 1606 by Sir William Paston, who in the following year had his tomb erected in the Parish Church, with his effigy in armour, he himself dying very shortly after its completion. In the schoolroom there still remains the table at which young Nelson sat and pursued the studies which helped in the shaping of that intellect which afterwards proved to be of such service to his country. The brick lying in a handsome casket on the centre table, bears his name, which is reputed to have been engraved thereon by him, a habit, alas, so ingrained into the British schoolboy. On the wall just above the place where Nelson sat, a laurel wreath is hung upon each anniversary of the battle of Trafalgar.

KITTY MALONE'S MISSION.

A PATHETIC SHORT STORY.

By KATE M. CLEARY.

"'TIS goin' out ye are, Kitty?"

There was nothing in the weak old voice to make Kitty start as she did. She hesitated in her task of pinning her rusty shawl around her thin shoulders.

"I was that same," she admitted cheerfully. "'Tis a beautiful day entirely. The—the walk 'ud do me good."

"Faith, it would. Ye've been kep' in the house pretty clost with that long pneumony of mine. Will ye be gone long?"

"Sure, 'tis quite a step to the market, Dennis. I think I'll be goin' to the farthest wan. They do be havin' things there more reasonable-like. It's," she paused, "it's—our Sunday dinner I'm goin' to—get!" she concluded.

"I wouldn't be afther buyin' anythin' extravagant, Kitty," counselled Dennis Malone. He sat huddled forward in the pitiful inertia of age and physical lassitude. "The docther an' medicines must 'ave took a heap of our savin's. I—wouldn't buy what might be called luxuriant, so to spake."

"I won't, Dennis!" promised Kitty. She was tying her plain little bonnet on her sleek old head. "You can trust me for that!" she added with what seemed unnecessary fervour. "I—I won't!"

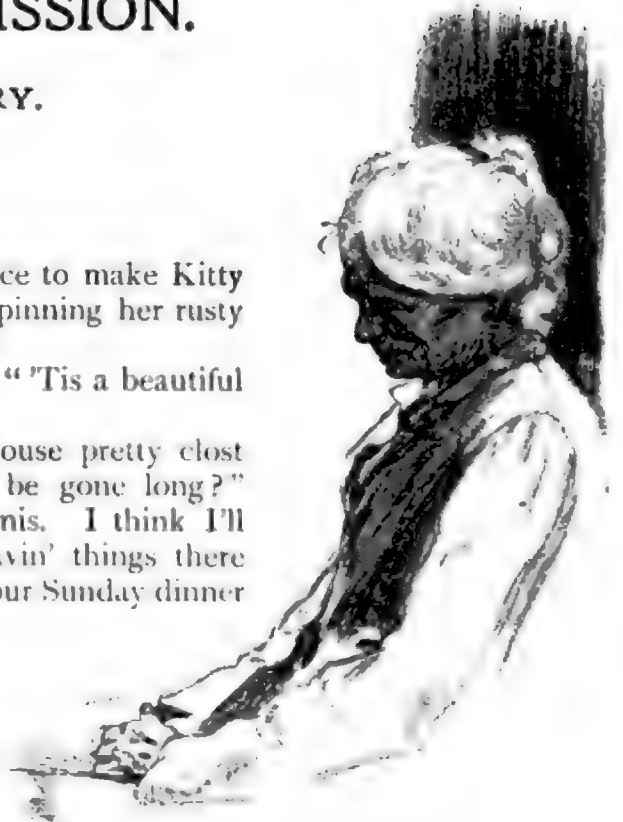
She did not leave the room at once. She stood behind him, trembling, cowering, irresolute, a queer agitation convulsing her worn and wrinkled countenance. She looked with blinking eyes at the aged form in the rocker, then around the room—the barest, poorest, shabbiest, cleanest little room! The grime of a generation of objectionable tenants had been scrubbed out of the rough boards by Kitty's energetic hands. These same busy hands had polished the few chairs, and made shining the one small window, and kept immaculate the furnishings of the bed in the corner, and fashioned the bright patchwork quilt thereon, and prepared the little meal—plain and meagre enough for a convalescent—which was set forth on a little table drawn beside the old man's chair.

"It may happen," she declared, speaking hurriedly, as though the possibility had just occurred to her, "that I mayn't be back for a—for a rale good bit, Dennis. 'Tis thinkin' I am of goin' over to see Nora, if 'twould be safe to lave you that long." Then, as she felt his eyes turn slowly in her direction, with a sort of questioning surprise, "I—I'm afther hearin' Mary Ellen ain't as well as she might be, an'——"

"Eh—Mary Ellen!" His tone was vibrant with anxiety. "Is Mary Ellen ailin'?"

"Not to mention," Mrs. Malone hastened to assert. She was wishing she had not chosen his favourite grandchild to afflict. "Only a little—a weeny bit quare-like." She picked up a basket near, and edged towards the door. There she paused, gripping the basket until her knuckles showed white, a slow, distressed flush staining the pale saffron of her cheek. "So—you won't mind if I don't get home for a couple of hours—eh, Dennis?" She broke off. She was swallowing hard. Dennis looked up—met full the eager, penetrating intensity of her gaze. He forced a valiant smile to his bloodless lips. His eyes narrowed into an expression of quizzical leniency. The unfailing courage of his race rang in the kind old voice.

"'Tis fine I'll be goin' on, plaze God. Do be steppin' along now, Kitty woman! Don't be afther givin' me airy a thought. Sure, the stren'th is comin' back in me to



bate anythin' ye ever dr'amed of. I won't be lookin' for ye till 'tis past noon. Now don't stand thriflin', woman dear. Gwan! But," his piping voice followed her out of the door, "I wouldn't be gettin' a—a luxuriant dinner, so to spake, Kitty!"

Mrs. Malone, skurrying along one of the many poor streets that lie south of the Thames, almost fell over the tattered figure of a boy who seemed to have sprung from the ground at her very feet.

"Wisha, where are ye hurryin' to, Mrs. Malone? Is it worse himself is?"

"No—no, Patsy Heffernan. 'Tis—'tis goin' to my juty I am——"

"An' lavin' the church behind ye?" he asked, incredulously.

Patsy was a merciless inquisitor. Mrs. Malone withered under his frank doubt of her veracity.

"Patsy," she entreated, "you run to the house—do now! I wouldn't inconvenience ye, but ye's the most accommodatin' bye in the parish. If ye'd but be waitin' around like to see if himself wants anythin' afore I get back——"

Patsy's freckled hatchet face looked out from its furze-bush of straight, bleached hair with suddenly awakened interest. "What'll ye give me if I do!" he demanded.

"Glory be!" ejaculated Mrs. Malone. She stood staring helplessly at the shabby young Celtic Shylock, who, with his overgrown frame bent forward, his feet in the broken boots turned toes inward, his hands thrust in his pockets, and his ragged arms akimbo, awaited her answer with ravenous expectancy.

"Why—Patsy, bye—" She was fumbling at the waist of her gown. Suddenly she desisted. If she had money at the Penny Bank—or anywhere else, for the matter of that—would she be bent on her present mission? Would she be tramping these many weary streets? "Glory be!" she said again.

There really was nothing more to say. Patsy's rapacious expression became merged in a bored frown. "Mebbe it's goin' to the ayter ye are. Hope ye won't be late." He cast a sharp glance at the basket. Involuntarily Mrs. Malone jerked it behind her back, but it was too big to escape notice. "I won't kape ye any longer romancin', ma'am!" With which Parthian shot young Mr. Heffernan took himself away.

Trembling, little Mrs. Malone looked after him. "Musha now, the varmint hasn't got the heart of a herrin'! An' the way he looked at the basket. Wethen now, I wonder did he suspicion anythin'?" She bent her spare little body against the bitter east wind and hastened on. "Sure, if I cud make up my mind to go to Thomas—but he hasn't only all his own to kape, but his wife's ould aunt as well. Then there's Nora. But she don't know the last farthing's gone, an' it would scald the heart of her to think of us wantin'—she's that tindther, the crathur! Malachi—he'd be free with his money—if he had enny. But 'twas never a coin he cud hould in his pocket, no matther how much he airnt. An' Daylia, that's a cook—" She walked less rapidly. Her head drooped meditatively. Was it possible she might let Delia know of their straits? Was it in her direction that relief lay—reprieve? But as suddenly as it had come the gleam in the faded eyes flickered out. Delia had been saving to buy a coat and a feather boa. Delia always had been stylish. And it was grand Delia looked, to be sure, when she was dressed up. No, it would never do to appeal to Delia. If only Rody were at home! Rody, the gay, loving, hard-working young fellow, who would never let her or his father suffer! But he had gone to South Africa this many a month back. Was he alive or dead? Sure 'twas a sad world, it was! "Arrah, 'tis nothing of the sort!" she told herself with sudden energy. "Isn't it ashamed of yerself ye are to be paradin' along like a 'en on a rainy day—now runnin' a bit an' then sthoppin' entirely? Go on wid ye!" she adjured herself sternly. "Go—" She stopped short as a massive form loomed up before her—as a broad, roseate countenance beamed down upon her.

"Mrs.—Mrs. Comisky!" she murmured. She had long known Mrs. Comisky for "a dacint woman." In the Malones' more prosperous times they had been neighbours. Their children had gone to the same parish school together.

"'Tis me," corroborated Mrs. Comisky. She wore a cloth skirt and a coat of electric seal plush. From a fur collarette a cataract of bushy heads and tails dangled over her capacious bosom. On her hat a long-beaked green bird perched in a grove of aspiring, if rigid, ostrich feathers. The vigorous hand she extended to Mrs. Malone was gorgeously



of these lines of depressed, patient people—men, women, and children. Restricting and dividing each line were rails of the universal dingy shade that emphasised the melancholy atmosphere of the place.

She shuddered. If anyone were to see her here—now! What if the fact that she had applied for relief were to get abroad in the parish! What—a voice recalled her. It was her turn at the window.

"Name?" asked the voice.

She found herself looking up at a thin, middle-aged man, with penetrating eyes, a brownish moustache, and an expression of keen intelligence. Her name! She cast a terrified look round. The applicants in the rear were paying no attention to her. The greater number carried yellow cards, more or less crumpled and dirty. The man behind the window spoke again.

"Catherine," she answered huskily—"Catherine Malone."

"Ever received aid from the Guardians before?"



"No—oh, no, sir!"

"Got help from—" He rattled off the names of half-a-dozen philanthropic and benevolent societies.

"Never, sir."

"Married—widow—single—deserted?"

"Married this forty-nine year to Dennis Malone, sir."

"How many children? Sex—married—employed—live at home?"

"Seven—five livin' here—two above, sir. Three married, that has all they can do to care for their own. Wan workin' to kape herself. Wan in South Africa, sir."

Would the questions never cease? A queer blackness came in fragmentary clouds before her. She had eaten no breakfast. There had been only enough to leave for Dennis. Involuntarily she put out her hand and clutched at the ledge to steady herself. Suppose she were to be taken ill here, and it was put in the paper! It would kill Dennis. It would break Nora's heart. Delia could never hold up her head again! She must keep her dreadful secret! Still questions—questions! She answered them as best she could. Her age, her husband's, their nationality, the cause of their distress.

"That's all." The man looked up from his writing. "The official will call to investigate. That's all now."

Then Kitty found herself outside the wooden paling. A stream of people were surging across the room to another window

on the opposite side—a window behind which barrels and boxes, sacks and bundles, all containing necessities of life, rose in a mighty pile straight up to the ceiling. The portly policeman took pity on her.

"What'll ye give me if I do?" he demanded.

"You'll be round to-morrow," he

assured her cheerfully. "Visitor will get to your place to-day. He'll give you a ticket. Come in to-morrow."

She did not know how she got out into the street. She was buffeting her way back, her empty basket dangling on her arm, and in her heart deep disappointment—a bitter despair. She did not know that, had she stated how immediate was their necessity for relief, she need not have waited for help



"'Tis now. A b'iled potaty an' a bit o' cabbage——"

"Sure, what more cud the Prince o' Wales ask?" demanded Kitty Malone.

That day she duly presented her yellow ticket at the window. She, too, received her coal cheque and the food which were her due. Could she carry them all home? The flour was unwieldy. She had made a public demand—she had asked for and received charity for the first time in all her cheerful, uncomplaining, hard-working, heroic old life. And the knowledge stung her. Her thin cheek was crimson. Her faded eyes had a strange glitter. She had begged—she! And she knew if it were to save Dennis from suffering she would do it again. What would her children say if they knew! Thomas, who was a postman; Nora, of the scant possessions and tender heart; Delia, who was a credit to the family when she came to see them, wearing her best clothes; Malachi, who would give if he had it—to anyone, for the matter of that; and Rody—the baby of the family, "the best of the bunch!" as Dennis put it. She—their mother—had disgraced them all! A rush of tears blinded her.

"Look out!" "Get out of that!" "Hi!" "You'll be —" "There—she's down!"

She was crossing the street when the shrill Babel of cries assailed her. Startled, confused, she stood still. The delay was fatal. The next instant the speeding trap had caught the skirt of her gown. She fell—rolled over—over. A dense crowd gathered instantly. An angry shout went up. Kitty was helped to her feet. Rice, soap, flour, coffee—all that she had striven so hard to procure, lay scattered on the ground. But Kitty, bruised, shocked, quivering with nervous fright, was not seriously hurt.

"Don't say anythin' to the man, gentlemen!" she pleaded. "'Twas me own fault. I do get romancin' when I'm alone. I wasn't lookin' out when I ought! 'Twas thinkin' I was, when I got in the way. Sure," as someone expressed regret for her loss, "what's the vally of a few thrifles like that same!"

She would not give her name and address. She permitted herself, however, to be helped on to a tram. She rode home in foodless state. And all the time her fingers unconsciously gripped the bit of yellow pasteboard.

The sight of a crowd gathered before her little home sent her reeling onward with a cry—faint, ineffective, quavering.

Dennis! Something had happened to Dennis! Dennis had learned of her deception, and the truth had killed him!

It was Patsy Heffernan who reassured her—Patsy, capering around and yelling like an Indian. "There's a sojer—a sojer—a rale sojer in there!" he screamed.

A path was made for the tottering old figure. She got to the door. It was opened. The blackness which had descended the day previous again came before her. This time it was lit by dancing flecks of flame. She staggered—fell foward.

"Mother!" The word sounded from a vast distance. "She's coming to—mother!" Strong arms were around her. A man's face bent over her—a brave, good face, brown and rugged, with straight mouth, square chin, and eyes full of loving solicitude.

"I didn't think my surprising you would give you such a turn, mother! I was wounded a while back. I got leave with some others. I got most of my back pay saved. Here, drink this wine Tim Comisky sent over. Mrs. Comisky is cooking supper. She came in with a basket just before I got here. I had Mary Alice Ryan buy our dinner. I told her to get the like for Larry and herself while she was about it. What—what are you looking for?"

Their eyes met. "'Tis yourself is a skeleton, mother," he said. "We've got to get you good and hearty again." He had looked away. He kept his face turned from her. She put her arms around his neck—drew his head down to her breast.

"Rody, you—you know!"

"Oh, mother!" He could get no farther. He crushed a bit of cardboard in her hand. "Mother, if—if I hadn't come——"

"'Tis your mother's gettin' gay, Rody!" cried Dennis. "Visitin' yesterday! Gallavantin' again to-day!" He cackled joyously. "I was thinkin' she'd spend all our money. Then, mebber," laughing again at his own joke, "we might have to go to the poorhouse for help—Kitty an' me!"

"No fear of that," Rody laughed back at him. He was holding in his fond and faithful grasp the nervous hands which held some torn scraps of yellow paper. "No fear—eh, mother?"

"No—Glory be to God," cried Kitty Malone. "Glory, an'——"

Her soldier son bowed his head. "Thanks!" he said.

a habit of falling in every alternate race in which she started. So well known was this habit that men would bet even money that she would fall. I bought her for about £50 and trained her myself, cantering her for miles in the jungle. As luck would have it, I didn't have the least trouble with her and won by about half-a-length—a pretty close finish for a four-mile race.

"During that race odds of one hundred to one were laid against Baby Blake, the very odds which were offered the first race I ever rode. The way it happened was that one of the jockeys was wearing colours somewhat similar to mine. At the second fence his horse fell and it was mistaken for mine. One worthy gentleman who had better glasses than the others, or was a closer observer than his comrades, saw the mistake and took up all the bets he could get, with the result that he made a small fortune when I won. The man who rode second was a crack Indian steeplechase rider, an Englishman, and the horse was owned by Bibby, of the 13th Hussars, who afterwards commanded a heavy Dragoon Regiment.

"In India I remember two funny incidents. The judges sometimes were not particularly good, and on one occasion when riding in a very bad light I suggested to my opponent that we should have a little fun at the expense of the judge. I really won by half-a-length, but as we were returning to weigh in I talked to my friend as if he had won. This so astonished the judge that he ordered the race to be re-run the next day, and I won again.

"The other occasion there was a somewhat close finish at Lucknow. The judge was talking at the time and was on the point of giving the race away from me when a friend, recognising what was about to happen, called out my name in a congratulatory manner. The judge hearing this suddenly changed his decision, and for some time after my friend used to declare that he won that race for me.

"Yes, I have had some curious experiences at one time and another. One of them happened in the First Class Handicap at Lucknow in 1869, when I was riding my horse Rockwood. I trained him myself on a right-handed course, but had to run him on a left-handed one. The result was he went right out of the course, and I had so much trouble in getting his head straight that I debated with myself whether it was the least good continuing the race. I decided, however, to try, and managed to get him back;

then I started after the others and won by half-a-head. My time was a minute and fifty-seven seconds for the mile, which, all things considered, was a remarkable achievement.

"In another race, won by Rockwood, Watts Russell, for whom I had ridden Maid of the Mist, was riding. He had injured his knee-cap some time before and ought not really to have ridden at all. His horse tried to run out, and, in consequence of the injury to his knee, Russell was not able to keep the brute straight, and, falling over the animal's shoulder, broke his neck.

"Perhaps the best race I ever won was at Chelmsford on Pictus. When leading I fell, and just as I was picking my horse up, the animal immediately behind me jumped on to my saddle and, striking me, knocked me clear of Pictus, who got up and bolted down the course, so I had to run after and catch him. By that time three horses were ahead of me. I, however, went in pursuit, passed two without very much trouble, and catching the third, who cut it when collared, won almost on the post by a very short head.

"Another occasion on which I rode a decidedly humorous race was at Hawthorne Hill. I had two horses in the race and was riding one of them. My mount fell, and the other horse refused at the jump at which I had fallen. I got back to the take off-side of the fence, flogged my other horse over it, then mounted my own and finished the race.

"That experience reminds me of one in which Roddy Owen figured at Sandown. The jockeys had reached the last fence but one and the race was reduced to a match when Roddy and another rider fell. Roddy jumped on to one of the horses and began to ride. Then he noticed that it was not his horse. He rode after his own, caught it, changed horses, jumped the last fence and won his race.

"Perhaps the best day's work I ever did was at Somerleyton, Sir Saville Crossley's place near Lowestoft. I had eight mounts in one day; out of eight races I won two, and was second in several others. They were all under National Hunt rules, so that they had to be at least two-mile races. I thus rode at least sixteen miles, to say nothing of cantering to the post and so on. I finished perfectly fresh, as I invariably finish even to-day.



"What about accidents?"

"One doesn't count accidents. Still, I have broken thirteen bones in my body at various times. I have had two bones in my left leg smashed, three bones in my right arm, three fingers, four ribs at one time, though the surgeon only discovered two, and one rib on another occasion, and knocked my floating rib clear of the one above it. I have naturally had many falls, but I have been lucky in them as a rule, insomuch that some of the worst came at the fag end of the season and laid me up at a time when in the ordinary way I should not have been riding.

"I have had concussion of the brain as the result of falls, but in my experience, at all events, it is not nearly so serious a matter as people are led to believe. I remember in April, 1892, I had a bad fall at Colchester. My horse fell at the water jump and the toss knocked me out for about twenty minutes. When I came to I should have been able to have ridden on the same day, but I didn't have a mount. Anyway, in two days I was riding and winning for Lord Decies.

"A more serious accident happened to me some nine months after, in January, 1893. There was a hard frost and people were actually skating within a short distance of the natural water jump. I was leading when my horse fell with me. I knew that the man for whom I was riding thought I ought to win easily, so I got up at once in order to mount.

"As I rose, the off fore-plate of the horse behind caught me a heavy blow on the forehead. I was knocked senseless. A stretcher was sent for, but before it arrived I had recovered and was able to be led away between two friends. In spite of that, however, six days later I was riding at Hurst Park with bandages round my head. I should have won that day, but my horse fell. He hit the guard rail and went right through the fence, and though I naturally came off his back I was not hurt.

"Bad as these have been, they are not as bad as a fall I had in the hunting field. There was a gate which I thought was closed, and I rode at it. Unfortunately, the gate was unlatched, and my horse hitting the top, we fell with a terrific crash on some cobblestones which were covered with moss. The result was that my arm was broken at the elbow, and to make it worse someone tried to drag me by that arm into a carriage which was standing near by. That accident prevented me riding for some time."

"Have you during your racing experience ever had any difficulties with the members of the crowd?"

"I do recall one or two. At Wye, at the end of a race, when the crowd swarmed all over the course, a man without any provocation hit my horse a hard blow. I went after him, and another man caught me across the thigh with all his might, but ducked pretty quickly under the rails. I have always thought that they were in league and had probably backed my horse and were angry at my not winning. Another day, coming home in the train after I had been riding, two men got into the carriage. They evidently did not know who I was, and they began abusing me right and left. I refrained from interfering for quite a considerable time, and at last I suggested that they should leave off, as I was the man of whom they were talking. Thinking that being two to one they could bully me, they tried it, but when I threatened to punch their heads if they persisted, they very soon desisted. Those men always do knuckle under if anyone shows fight.

"How did I learn to ride? I didn't. I am practically self-taught, but I learnt to improve my horsemanship through riding gallops at Epsom and other places. When I was in India, for instance, I used to get up at daylight in order to ride the horses at their gallops. Jack Jones, who was a very brilliant horseman, gave me some hints when I used to go out with him, and if one has any aptitude he can pick up a great deal by watching others ride, and riding with them."

"How do you train?"

"I never train," replied Sir Claude. "I could get up now and go and ride a race. The amount of exercise I take every day, however, keeps me quite fit, and I am never out of condition. I work with dumb-bells, clubs, or a punch-ball every morning in my room, before my bath, and when I am in the country, as I generally am, the work I do with axe, saw and mattock keeps me fit to ride a three-mile steeplechase at a moment's notice. Indeed, I practically live in the open air and work my muscles hard all the time. Another thing which conduces to my keeping in condition is that I live very plainly and simply.

"No; I by no means go in for an exclusively meat diet, as I think most men eat too much meat, and I often make my meal off fish with some green vegetables.

produced two old spelling-books and opened one of them at random. The lesson on that page had to do with feminine names, which seemed to her especially appropriate.

"Now," she said, "you devise the phrases necessary, and I will write one down after each of these names. That will give us as fine a code as we could ask."

"I think," remarked Mr. Coakley, thoughtfully, "that we'd better begin by arranging a code that will enable you to tell me where to look for things you have forgotten and wish to have forwarded."

"I won't forget anything," retorted Mrs. Coakley, with asperity.

"You did the summer you went to Scotland, and also the summer you went to Scarborough, and likewise the time you made that little Irish trip," suggested Mr. Coakley, blandly.

Mrs. Coakley flushed indignantly, but her reason told her that he was right, so she jotted down after various names such phrases as: "In the linen-cupboard," "——'s bureau or cupboard," "In the store-room," and "You will find ——."

"The dashes," she explained, "are for the name of a person or an article. They will have to be filled in when sending the cablegram."

"I quite understand," replied Mr. Coakley. "And now you will have to put down something to indicate that you have changed your original plans. You always do change them, you know."

Mrs. Coakley bit her lip, but wrote: "Plans changed. Write me at——."

"And something to show that you have lost your trunks," continued Mr. Coakley. "You always lose a trunk, you know. And you always run short of money at the most unexpected times."

"That will do, Edward," said Mrs. Coakley, coldly. "I will finish this code myself, copy it in the other spelling-book, and leave one of the books for you. When I try to economise you never appreciate my efforts. Suppose one of the girls should be ill or get hurt. You would want to know it immediately, and you wouldn't like to have it all written out at sixpence or a shilling a word, either."

"Put it all down," he answered, meekly, "and I'll study it out when the time comes."

He was glad to be relieved of the burden of devising phrases, anyway, and the cipher-code passed out of his mind within five

minutes. Nor did it recur to him for some time afterward. The first Continental trip is a matter of great domestic importance, and the period immediately preceding the start is usually overcharged with excitement. There are so many details to claim attention. Then, when a man is left alone, there comes a sense of freedom that is delightful—for a very short time. It is quite immaterial how long he remains at the club or what time he gets home to dinner. But in a few weeks this liberty palls, and he would gladly exchange it for the restrictions of family life again; however, during those few weeks he does not worry to any appreciable extent.

Mr. Edward Coakley did not see any occasion to worry until the morning that he received this cablegram: "Ann Esther Monday Laura."

His head was not as clear as it might have been that morning, for which it is unnecessary to give a reason, and he read the cablegram over twice.

"I know Laura all right enough," he soliloquised. "That's Mrs. Coakley. But who in thunder is Ann Esther Monday, and how am I interested in her?"

Then he suddenly remembered the code.

"But she never gave it to me!" he exclaimed. "Where is it?"

The cablegram had been delivered to him at his office, and he straightway started for home. The message probably only announced the safe arrival of the party in Paris, but he didn't know it. So he made a search for the book. The cook and the maid had been left to keep house for him in his wife's absence, and he finally came on the maid in the library, dusting.

"Mary," he said, abstractedly, "do you know anything about Ann Esther Monday?"

The maid looked at him blankly.

"I mean," he corrected, "the code-book. Of course, you never heard of Ann Esther Monday, but she—she's in the code-book. Have you seen her—I mean *it*?"

The maid shook her head, and backed towards the door.

"It's a spelling-book," he explained. "Mrs. Coakley has just cabled Ann Esther Monday, and I don't know what it means."

As soon as the maid could get away she hastened to the kitchen to talk the matter over with the cook. "How can a code-book be a spelling-book?" she demanded.

"It can't," said the cook, decidedly. "It's wan iv thim big law-books. Did ye niver

"Never heard of her!" exclaimed the astonished maid; "and if there's any more bother about strange women in this house I'll give notice. It don't look right."

"You don't understand," explained Mr. Coakley. "I must find the code-book."

"I gave it to you once," she retorted. "It was as big as the dictionary."

Then Mr. Coakley, in spite of his anxiety, took time to explain, thereby saving a hard-earned reputation for sanity that he had been in a fair way to lose. A cipher-code is a very dangerous thing for those who are not accustomed to handling it, and who consequently fail to use proper caution in quoting from it.

After the maid and the cook had agreed to make a thorough search for the book, he hurried to a telegraph-office, and cabled his wife at the Rome address they had settled upon before she left: "Where is code-book?" He was too worried by this time to be willing to leave anything to chance.

"To-morrow," he told himself, "it will be all over, and I shall know the worst."

At the club that evening he sat apart, moody and abstracted, thereby creating comment, for he was ordinarily a most genial and companionable man. But he was sure now that there was something seriously wrong. Otherwise, why this haste to Rome? Could anything have happened to one of the girls?

"To-morrow," he kept saying; "to-morrow I shall know."

The expected cablegram came, showing apparently that his had been received. The answer read: "Della book my Stella Bella Stella Ella Laura."

He was dazed. He wanted to say something, but he did not feel equal to the task. Then he felt that he needed sympathy, a comforting word, so he walked into his partner's room, and stated the case to him.

"I cabled," he said, "to know where the code-book is, and for reply I get Della Bella Ella and two Stellas."

"Well," replied his partner, "which one of them do you suppose has it?"

"You don't understand," he moaned. "She has given me the place where the code-book is, but she has given it to me in cipher. See? The word 'book' appears in the cablegram. And I imagine she has told me a lot of other things, too, but I don't know; I don't know."

He went wearily out, muttering: "Della Bella Ella and two Stellas," and, as he was still repeating this when he entered the smoking-room of the club, it was only natural that enquiries should be made.

"Where are they?" one of the younger club-members asked.

"Rome," he answered, disconsolately.

"Then why should it worry you?" demanded the young man. "They're not coming back, are they?"

"That's just the trouble," he said, dismally. "I don't know. They may be on their way now?"

The young man retired, looking sympathetic and solemn. He did not know exactly what the trouble was, but, on general principles, he was sorry for Coakley. He would have been sorry for any man with such a string of names on his mind.

For some time Mr. Coakley sat in the corner of the smoking-room, absorbed in his dismal speculations, while other members of the club looked at him pityingly, and wondered. Then, as if suddenly inspired by a brilliant thought, he rushed out, and presently returned with an armful of spelling-books, which he dumped on a table, and began studying in a most unsystematic, nervous and erratic way. But it was of no use. He found several tables of feminine names, but it finally dawned upon his troubled brain that, even if he found the right one, he wouldn't know the meaning of the words.

He was just pushing the books away, with a dismal sigh, when his office-boy appeared with a cablegram.

"At last!" he cried, joyfully.

"I hope it contains good news, old man," remarked one of the party who had been quietly watching him.

"Oh, it does," returned Coakley, with some of his customary cheerfulness; "I know it does."

He opened it, read it, and sank back in his chair.

"Does it?" asked the clubman.

Coakley wearily passed the cablegram to the clubman. It read: "Florence Florence Florence Flora Dora Cora Cora Dora Nora Laura."

"Great Scott! old man, how did this happen?" inquired the clubman, solicitously.

"I don't know," he answered, weakly. Several of the other members joined them, and they seemed so distressed and



Cora. "——is unwell."

Caroline. "Can we spend a hundred pounds additional for clothes?"

Della. "You will find ——."

Dora. "Not serious."

Ethel. "Is anything wrong?"

Esther. "Leave for Rome."

Ellen. "In the linen-cupboard."

Ella. "In the dining-room bureau."

Florence. "Plans changed. Write me at ——."

Frances. "In the store-room."

Flora. "—— has had an accident."

Genevra. "Address next letter to——."

Louise. "Cable fifty pounds. Send a hundred pounds by post."

Madge. "Serious. Come by first boat."

Nora. "Running short of money. Send one hundred pounds by post."

Stella. "——bureau or cupboard."

After a time he returned to the club, in his usual good spirits.

"How about those girls?" he was asked.

"I found them," he replied.

"Found them!"

"Yes; they were all in the spelling-book."

"Your form of humour," they told him, not without bitterness, "has more extraordinary phases than any described in the text-books."

"Not pha ses," he corrected, "but phrases."

Then he produced the four cablegrams, with the translations, and submitted them for inspection. They were to the following effect:—

"Ann Esther Monday Laura."

"All well. Leave for Rome Monday. Laura."

"Genevra Geneva Laura."

"Address next letter to Geneva. Laura."

"Della book my Stella Bella Stella Ella Laura."

"You will find book in my bureau or cupboard, Bella's bureau or cupboard, or the dining-room bureau. Laura."

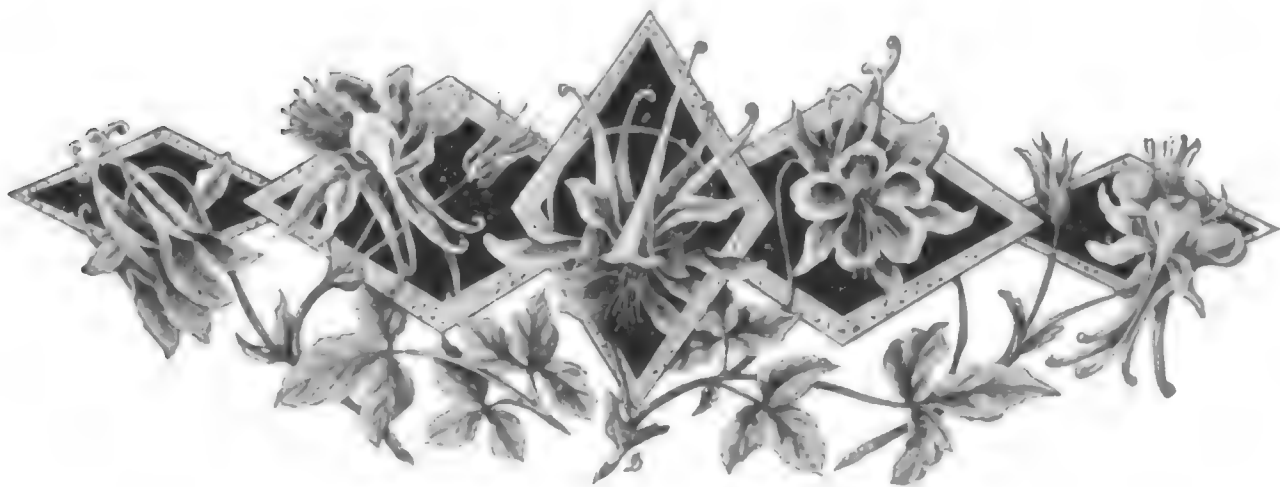
"Florence Florence Florence Flora Dora Cora Cora Dora Nora Laura."

"Plans changed. Write me at Florence, Italy. Florence has had an accident. Not serious. Cora is unwell. Not serious. Running short of money. Send me a hundred pounds by post. Laura."

"It sounds fishy," they said among themselves, and he knew what they were saying.

The next day Mrs. Edward Coakley was worried and puzzled by this cablegram: "No economy in ruined reputation. Burn code-book."

Mr. Coakley knew the message would worry her, but thought it only fair that it should. He had already done his share of the worrying.



Modern Social Punishments.

How the Leading Professions Degrade their Offenders.

By Henry Leach.

THESE are the days above all others when the punishment is made to fit the crime in the most effective manner. If any eager but impecunious reader were tempted to take a copy of this Magazine from a bookstall without the knowledge of the newsagent, and without any formal offer of payment, he would run the risk of a most unpleasant confinement in one of the national gaols. That, however, would be a crude form of offence against the moral and social law, and would merit such a primitive manner of punishment. The gaol is good enough for the common criminal, say our rulers of classes and of professions, but we must have something more artistic, something more effective, something that will make a wound, perhaps deep and permanent, in the sensitive mind, for those who, knowing our own laws and customs, yet break them, and in doing so offend our collective dignity and reputation, and perhaps cause some injury to the common people in the process. So it comes to pass that there are many laws which may not be upon the statute books of England, and within the purview of which the ordinary man could not come if he tried, but which, to those who are amenable to them, are dreaded more than all the provisions of the criminal code.

To begin with, take the case of the Member of Parliament. The House of Commons is a law unto itself. Without any club or other license, it dispenses intoxicating drinks over its bar, and when occasion arises does so long after the "houses" close. Such an autocratic and independent institution must have its own laws for its own Members, so that when they offend against the dignity of the House and show contempt for its usages they shall meet with due and proper punishment, administered by Parliament itself without any interference from the

judges outside, who could, indeed, take no cognisance of some of the nice offences which anger the mind of St. Stephen's. But not everybody is aware that for the most effective punishment the House has a prison of its own, which is intended specially for the refractory M.P., and to which more than one of our law-makers has found his sorrowful way.

This prison is situated a little way up in the Clock Tower, and a prison it is in sober fact; but to the average gaol-bird it would be his idea of Elysium. Parliament does not count upon having more than two wicked M.P.'s at a time, and so it has only two sets of prisons, each intended for the accommodation of one prisoner. Each prison is a small suite of rooms, consisting of a sitting-room, about six yards square, with a carpet on the floor, and chairs and table, and two bedrooms. The spare bedroom is not designed for the accommodation of any guests whom the M.P. prisoner might desire to entertain over the week-end, but for the official of the House who is in constant attendance to see that the Honourable Member makes no attempt to escape.

The Supervisor of Badge Messengers is the official who is regarded as the particular man for guardian work of this kind, but besides being warder he is also the servant of his prisoner, and has to wait upon him as is necessary. The M.P. prisoner does not have at all a bad time as prisoners go, though he finds his position more exasperating than any other offender who is doing three months' "hard." He may arise and go to his rest again at the hours which most suit him, and the menu of all the choice dishes which are daily prepared in the Commons' kitchen for the good Members is regularly brought up to him for his selection. In a pretty consideration for his feelings, the bill is always brought to him afterwards.









Law Society in Chancery Lane, which is the 'solicitors' governing body, are three or four large volumes in which are printed in alphabetical order the names of all qualified solicitors, and these rolls, as they are called, are laid there on a desk for the inspection of anybody at any time. A new set of rolls is made up every year. When in the course of the year a solicitor who is on the list dies, the simple legend "Dead" is written through his name, and in the same way when it is proved that a solicitor is no longer fit to be a solicitor and the necessary formalities have been gone through, the pen is drawn through his name and there is written across it "Struck off the Rolls by order dated —." That is the end of that solicitor's career for the time being and usually for ever, for such of the histories of those solicitors who have been struck off the rolls as may be discovered make very sad reading. It is possible for a solicitor who has been struck off under certain conditions to be reinstated, but it may easily be imagined that reinstatement in the majority of cases is a hard thing to try for.

It is noteworthy that when a solicitor is thus brought to his trial, the result of which may be professional banishment, his prime accuser, and the man who takes the lead all through, need not necessarily be a client, but any person aggrieved or anyone having official cognisance of the facts. The application on his part must state in the form of an affidavit the nature of the "professional misconduct" of which the solicitor is said to be guilty—usually it is a case of defrauding the client in one way or another—and when all the necessary preliminaries have been gone through a trial of the case is held before a Committee of the Incorporated Law Society consisting of not less than three, or more than seven, members of the Council, and which trial is held just after the manner of the trial of an action in the High Court. After this hearing the Committee embodies its finding in a report which it transmits to the High Court, and then, according to that report, the lawyer concerned is either struck off the rolls or allowed to go his way again.

To the same effect, though in much simpler form, a barrister is struck off the rolls of his Inn, or "disbarred," as it is termed. It is a matter of rare occurrence, and the most notable instance of recent times was that of Dr. Krause, the traitor, who was a barrister

of the Middle Temple. The name of the man who is considered by the benchers to be no longer worthy of membership of the Inn is posted up, and after a certain period has expired his name is expunged. The autocratic benchers are not bound to give him any reason, though they may be called upon to satisfy the House of Lords that they had one which was good and sufficient.

Perhaps, however, the most severe form of modern professional punishment is that of the clergyman of the Church of England who is divested of his orders and cast in ignominy from the Church—an occurrence which is, fortunately, rare. When a congregation have come to the conclusion that their leader is not fitted for his exalted post, ecclesiastical law is set to work, in due course the clergyman is arraigned before the Chancellor of the Diocese, and tried in proper legal form. If found guilty, and banished from the Church, he is given very short notice to remove himself and all his belongings from the vicarage or rectory where he resides, and is forbidden, under heavy penalties, ever again to enter the church in his clerical capacity.

To go from one extreme in professional disgrace to the other, it is probably the man who has been "hammered" on the Stock Exchange who finds the least difficulty in pulling himself together afterwards, though nominally, at the time at all events, he is a ruined man. What the punishment which is peculiar to the stock market lacks in permanence, however, it makes up for in dramatic form. It is when a member has overreached himself speculatively, or when his clients have "let him down," as he does, and they do, often enough, in times of "slumps" and heavy differences in tape prices, that a member becomes a fit subject for the hammer. In the purely commercial sense he has failed, and is a Stock Exchange bankrupt. As such, he can no longer be allowed to do business in the "house," and his fall must be announced to all the other members. He may take the initiative himself, and instruct the "house" to be told the worst, or, hoping against hope that something may turn up, as is the habit on "'Change," he may wait till after the fortnightly pay day, when dishonoured cheques are returned to his creditors, and the end rapidly approaches.







* THE DOINGS OF VIGOROUS DAUNT : BILLIONAIRE.

THE UNDOING OF THE BREAD TRUST.

By AMBROSE PRATT.

Illustrated by STANLEY L. WOOD.

I.

SO diverse, multitudinous and extravagant have been the accounts published the wide world over of the motives that induced Britain's greatest enemy, Mr. Salem Hardcastle—to the wonder of the universe—to forego and abandon the inhuman campaign that he had successfully instituted against our lives and national prosperity, and moreover in so many foreign quarters is it still (in spite of repeated denials) believed and taught that our Imperial England stooped so low as to purchase the merciful complaisance of her enemy, that I, Rupert Granville, in contemplation of the continued silence of the principal actors in that dreadful drama, feel myself impelled by patriotic motives to speak and for the first time publicly reveal the truth. For only thus may false reports be dissipated, false opinions be corrected, and the dignity of England—so long blown upon by jealous and malicious controversialists—be washed of foul suspicion. I do not propose to relate in detail the open history of that dreadful winter, the darkest in England's annals—for no circumstance thereof can be forgotten in our own or any age, but I shall unveil the means employed—secretly and unheeded of the world, by that greatest philanthropist of any race or time—my master, Mr. Vigorous Daunt—to break the will and bend the purpose of a monster to whose merciless heart the cries of starving hundreds had appealed in vain.

On the evening of November 21st of that fateful and disastrous year, Mr. Vigorous Daunt and I, Rupert Granville, were flying with great speed in the Paris express towards Calais, seated in a private compartment which money had converted for the nonce into a dining-room. My master was morose and uncommunicative. After dinner I assumed

an air of indifference, and wrapping myself up in a rug, pretended to sleep. As I had hoped, Mr. Daunt became immediately exasperated. Nothing provoked him so much as a display of indifference.

"For heaven's sake, Granville," he cried, "are you a stick, a stone, or a gluttoned animal?"

I sat up lazily. "Well, what do you want—to play cards?"

His eyes glittered. "You act badly," he cried. "Curiosity is eating you."

I yawned. "You say so," I observed.

"What is taking us to London?" he demanded.

"A fair chance," I muttered, and yawned again. "London is my favourite city——" I lay back in the corner and closed my eyes.

"Granville!" he thundered.

"Eh!" I started up, affecting surprise. "You said?—I beg your pardon!"

He bit his lip, then smiled. "A conference," he suggested.

"I am at your service."

"Salem Hardcastle is in London," said Mr. Daunt.

"The Yankee millionaire and trust magnate?"

"The same."

"He is a friend of yours, perhaps?"

The little brown man sprang to his feet and crashed his clenched right hand on the open palm of his left.

"Such a friend!" he hissed. "Ah! such a friend!"

I gazed at him in great astonishment, for his eyes were burning and his face was livid. "How you can hate!" I muttered. "Our mission is of vengeance, then?"

"Yes!" His look was terrible.

"Whatever has Salem Hardcastle done to you?" I asked.

Mr. Daunt stared at me for a long moment, then, drawing a deep breath, he resumed his seat, and with a hand that trembled poured out a glass of champagne.

"I'll tell you," he said in a low voice, "but, mind you, no remarks!"

I nodded my head in assent.

He swallowed the wine at a gulp. "It goes back to the late seventies," he muttered. "We were fellow clerks in a stockbroker's office in New York. We loved the same woman—Silence!"

I had not spoken—but I bowed my head.

Mr. Daunt's eyes were like coals of fire.

"She preferred me," he declared.

"Naturally," I murmured.

The little brown man bent quickly forward and, with a look of lively affection, put his hand upon my knee. "Ay! naturally," he agreed—"but he, he wanted, as well as herself, her money—for she was an heiress!"

"Ah!"

"He was my superior. One morning some valuable bonds were found to be missing from our employer's safe. Suspicion, without my knowledge, fell on me, for even then, although scarcely twenty-two, I speculated, and I was at the moment in difficulties, having purchased some stocks unwisely for a fall that never came to pass. Pshaw!" (He waved his hand). "He worked the matter very prettily, that is certain. The very next day I had to settle, but my largest creditor was a friend who trusted and believed in me. Entirely unconscious of the fact that I was suspected of stealing the bonds, I asked for and obtained an hour's liberty and proceeded to my friend's office, intending to request a few days' convenience, for I had other irons in the fire and only wanted time. I was arrested as I was about to enter his office, and whirled off to a police station, where they searched me!" Mr. Daunt paused and put his hands up to his throat; he seemed to be choking. "The bonds," he proceeded in a hollow voice, "were found in the breast pocket of my coat. That coat a few moments before had been hanging up in that room of my employer's office shared between Hardcastle and myself. I changed to go out. You see?"

"My God!" I cried.

My master groaned. "I was tried and convicted. I could not defend myself—because in order to show a motive for my enemy's infernal treachery I must have dragged *her* name through the courts. I served twelve months in gaol!"

"But afterwards—afterwards!" I cried.

"I came out of prison a broken man, worn with disease, to find that she had married him. Ah!"

"What did you do?"

"He was rich. I was penniless. I changed my name and went to Australia."

"Then your real name is not 'Vigorous Daunt.'"

"Bah!" said my master, frowning disdainfully.

"Since then have you never crossed his path? Never tried for revenge?"

The little brown man's face went almost purple. "I have not been a billionaire so very long!" he grated. "For the past five years I have been waiting for him to leave America, waiting, waiting; while he kept to New York I could only hurt his pocket—and I desire another revenge. I might by chance get him into my power there, but it is true that I tried twice and failed. He is never to be found without a following—because he is so hated, having wronged so many that he fears assassination. Moreover, there he has me at this disadvantage: were he to recognise me before the right moment, he could reveal my identity, proclaim me a convicted thief, and effect my social ruin."

"But now he is in London."

"And we shall be there to-morrow."

"Have you any plan?"

"Only this. He is staying at the Continental. We shall be there, too. I shall disguise myself and pass as your valet. For the rest we must wait for circumstances."

"What is his business in England?"

"*The American Herald*, in which I read of his whereabouts, hints that he is at the head of a trust of millionaires that has been formed to corner the world's supply of wheat, with the object of forcing up the price of bread in England. It may be so; at any rate, it is pretty certain that such a trust exists, and it must have been for some months already hard at work, for two days ago the price of bread in London was suddenly raised to sixpence a loaf."

"Impossible!" I exclaimed.

"No," said Mr. Daunt. "But see for yourself!" He took a paper from his pocket and tossed it to me. I read and was convinced—for the facts were authoritatively announced. Nevertheless I was incredulous.

"No trust could possibly succeed in such an enterprise!" I declared.

"Sixpence a loaf!" said Mr. Daunt.



"Except temporarily; it would require——"

"Pshaw!" interrupted my master. "With enough money one could easily starve England, which depends entirely for its food upon foreign supplies. It is merely a question of buying and holding."

"Why, God bless my soul," I cried, "with bread at sixpence a loaf for a month, half England would be in the poorhouse."

"Well?"

"There would be riots—riots, do I say—a revolution!"

"Well?" repeated my master.

"War, perhaps."

"Perhaps—but would all that, riots, revolution, war, help England? Can one buy for threepence what is only for sale at sixpence?"

"Yes, if the vendor be in the purchaser's power."

"You assume too much!" said Mr. Daunt.

"England is a free country, and her laws lovingly regard trust magnates. But enough; my head aches and I am weary. Let us rest."

II.

While crossing from Calais to Dover Mr. Daunt mysteriously disappeared, but I became, in exchange for a master, possessed of a dapper little French valet, who introduced himself to my service as the steamer approached the landing-stage at Dover.

"Good-day, *M'sieur*," said he. "I hope zat you haf not had ze *mal de mer*. As for me—I haf been eel. Ah! horrible!"

Glancing at the person who accosted me, I beheld a small, pale face, framed with coal-black hair and ornamented with a pointed beard and curled moustaches.

"Thanks," I answered, icily. "I am never sea-sick—but I am sorry that you have suffered so much!"

"One—word—in your ear, *M'sieur*." The little Frenchman glanced suspiciously about him, then lowered his voice. "Ze fact ees, I haf not you ad-dress—not on purr-pose. Zere is a man on zis sheep—here, zat speak of you—not nice—vat you call eet—onfriendlee. I put you on guard. I hope I not offend."

"You are very good!" I stammered in reply, half-annoyed, half-amused. "What did he say?"

"He say—*M'sieur*—zat your valet ees—a clevailr, vair clevailr man. But you—*pardon*, *M'sieur*—he say zat you are ze blind bat—a fool!"

"You are mistaken," I said, coldly. "I have no valet."

With that I turned my back upon the little creature, for I was exasperated, but a chuckle that I recognised made me swiftly turn again and stare into his face.

I was met with a derisive wink.

"Confound you!" I muttered, wrathfully, but Mr. Daunt, for it was he, dissolved in chuckles, and until we reached London I had to endure an unceasing stream of railery.

Arrived at the Hotel Continental, by Mr. Daunt's command I engaged, in my own name, a handsome suite on the second floor, consisting of three bedrooms and a drawing-room, that adjoined those apartments occupied by the American millionaire, Mr. Hardcastle, and his family.

But, although the little brown man was apparently my valet, he immediately showed me that I was only a pawn in the game he was resolved to play.

"Look here, Granville!" said he, "while my task is to make friends with Salem Hardcastle's servants and pump them concerning their master, it is your part to make the acquaintance of Hardcastle himself, his wife and family, and, if possible, win their confidence. You understand?"

"I understand, but the task you set me is rather difficult."

"The more credit for you to achieve it. Now I will give you a few words of advice. Hardcastle is an inveterate gambler—that is his weak spot. Mrs. Hardcastle—who is his second wife——"

"What!" I gasped.

Mr. Daunt frowned. "The lady for whose sake he ruined me is dead," he muttered; "she died soon after the birth of her child—Mr. Hardcastle's eldest daughter, who is at this moment, perhaps, within fifty paces of where we stand."

"Yes, sir."

"The present Mrs. Hardcastle is by all accounts a vain woman, and a vainer mother. She has three children—a boy and two girls, ranging in age from five to fourteen. You will realise that flattery should succeed in that quarter."

"I see—and the eldest daughter?"

"Miss Hardcastle is reputed a beauty, but I have never seen her. She is about four-and-twenty years of age——"

I twirled my moustache, but Mr. Daunt noted the gesture and his eyes flashed.

"Idiot!" he growled. "Dukes have paid their court to her in vain. She is one of the richest heiresses on earth."

"If only I had a letter of introduction to some of them," I sighed.

"You are a fool," said Mr. Daunt. "You know the American ambassador, don't you?"

I sprang to my feet and hurried to the door.

"Put on a frock coat!" advised my master, drily. He thought of everything.

An hour later I returned from the American Embassy equipped with the desired letter. Mr. Daunt was pacing up and down his bedroom in a fume.

"What now?" I demanded.

"Did you obtain that letter?"

"Yes."

"Then you have had better luck than I. The fellow has a crowd of servants, but they are all as suspicious as the evil one himself. They can't be persuaded to talk, and I dared not bribe them."

"Have you learned anything?"

"Not from them. From the hotel servants this: Hardcastle does not leave his rooms. His wife and daughter go out frequently, but he never. He neither entertains nor receives social visits. He keeps himself invisible and even has his meals served privately. One of his rooms has been fitted up as an office and provided with a telephone. In this a secretary and four clerks are kept constantly at work receiving cables from all parts of the globe and replying to them. It will be impossible to abduct him, for he is always accompanied, and his valet, an old servant, sleeps in his ante-room."

"But he must go out sometimes, even for the sake of his health."

"Not so—he exercises an hour, morning and evening, at foils with his secretary. In my opinion he does not propose to stay here long. But you have been out; what is the talk of the streets?"

"The price of bread. No one seems to be able to speak of anything else. Do you think Hardcastle has anything to do with it?"

"I would stake my life that he is head of the trust. His extraordinary precautions are sufficient proof."

"Shall I present my introduction at once?"

"Not until after dinner this evening. Go out now and engage a suite of half-a-dozen rooms—no, better still, take—on lease if necessary—a small two-storied house in the

poorest part of the East End, somewhere between Whitechapel and the London Docks."

"What!" I cried, aghast.

"Pay a month's rent in advance; and secure the keys immediately, then furnish the place plainly and meanly. Provide for three bedrooms and a dining-room—no carpets or frills of any kind, you understand."

I stood stock still, surprised out of my wits. Mr. Daunt proceeded musingly: "Have the windows of one of the bedrooms barred in such a manner that not even a child could escape; also see that the door of that room is stout, and furnished with a new lock. That is all, I think. You may go!"

I left the hotel bewildered, but nevertheless I transacted my commission with energy. I secured, after some search, a little brick house, incomparably old and dirty, situated within a gunshot of the Fish Market. Other houses similar in structure and appearance surrounded it, and the neighbourhood was mean and poverty-stricken to an appalling extent. During my wanderings in search of furniture and a locksmith I could not help being struck with the fact that the inhabitants of the locality were strangely preoccupied. My appearance (I was dressed in fashionable morning costume) excited neither comment nor attention, and although I feel sure that under ordinary circumstances I should have been followed by crowds of beggars and children, not a soul accosted me. Men were collected in groups at every corner, conversing in hushed tones or not speaking at all. The women stood at their doors in knots of twos and threes, many nursing babes in arms, staring at each other. Business even seemed at a standstill, and the very costers had left their carts and gathered in half-silent clusters on the pavements. Never had I seen so much poverty, such pinched and hungry-looking children, such lowering and ominous faces. Occasionally glances of contempt and hate were cast at me, and every group was silent as I passed. Policemen were to be met with every hundred yards. There was a sort of desperation in the air, an ill-omened calmness that oppressed and disturbed me. I was glad to finish my business and return to the West End, but even there, in the busy whirl of the traffic and among the flaunting splendours of prosperity, I could not forget what I had seen, nor throw off the gloomy impression that had been produced. I felt like a man who has seen a ghost.



III.

I found Mr. Daunt seated in the drawing-room, absorbing the contents of the morning papers. He listened gravely to my report, then said, "This is only the second day. Wait a week! The papers report that the wheat market has been absolutely cornered. No supplies can be obtained except through certain channels. We are on the eve of a great national calamity."

"What about the Government?" I asked.

"The usual thing; they are making enquiries and, meanwhile, promises. They advise the people not to take alarm. Bah! By the way, give me your letter and I shall take it with your card to Mr. Hardcastle and request an appointment."

I handed it to him, and a few minutes later he returned with a message that the millionaire would be glad to see me at nine o'clock that evening.

Mr. Daunt thereupon disappeared, and I was left to my own devices until the dinner hour, when he entered the room and curtly directed me not to make my visit with empty pockets. Punctually at nine o'clock I knocked at Mr. Hardcastle's door. A servant admitted me to an anteroom, whence I was ushered by a gentlemanly-looking young man to a large inner apartment furnished as a reception room.

At one end of this a young lady in full evening dress was seated before a tiny desk, writing; her back was turned to me.

She did not move even when my name was announced; but a large and striking-looking man seated in an arm-chair in the middle of the room immediately rose and advanced with outstretched hand in my direction.

"I am glad to meet you, Captain Granville," he declared in a rather pompous voice.

"I am delighted to make your acquaintance, Mr. Hardcastle," I returned.

Then we looked at each other. The trust magnate was of medium height, a big-boned man, immaculately attired. His eyes were of a peculiar bluish grey tint, hard and metallic; his forehead, surmounted with an iron-grey, close-cropped stubble, was at the same time prominent and receding. He wore a short and bristling, but thick, moustache that half concealed his mouth. His nose was broad but strong, his chin was prominent, square and somewhat brutish. The face was, in fact, intelligent, full of character and

strength. He was evidently not a man to be trifled with. His eyes measured me for a moment with a cold and calculating stare, then he said, "Your business is?—eh?"

I shrugged my shoulders and smiled, but before I spoke an inspiration occurred to me. This man—I thought—however rich he may be, if he is really concerned in this monstrous wheat deal that is now exercising the world's attention, will nevertheless not turn up his nose at money.

"Well—" I drawled, "in the first place I have for some time been ambitious to know you, socially, don't you know?"

"Next!" he cut in, quick as a flash.

"In the second place I have a little spare cash to invest, and er—I have been told—"

"How much?" interrupted the millionaire.

I took the plunge. "A million or so," I answered, calmly.

Mr. Hardcastle's eyes glittered. "Dollars?"

"No; pounds; sterling, don't you know."

Mr. Hardcastle's eyes were like gimlets. "How is it that I have never heard of you?" he demanded.

"Oh, the cash is not mine," I drawled. "I'm only an agent; but I have full authority. The fact is, I am acting for Mr. Vigorous Daunt—you have heard of him, perhaps?"

"What! the billionaire!" cried Mr. Hardcastle; "who has not—though I have never met him! But has he sent you to me?"

"Yes."

"Where is he?"

"In Paris, laid up with a broken leg. He heard that you are managing the wheat trust and he wants to be in the deal if he can."

Mr. Hardcastle pursed up his lips, but though he tried he could not conceal his delight.

"Well, well," he said, "who knows—we may do business. You are in no great hurry I suppose."

"None."

A rap sounded suddenly on a far door, which opened slightly to disclose the head and shoulders of a sharp-looking young man. "Cable, sir," he said in a high-pitched nasal voice.

Mr. Hardcastle nodded, and his attendant vanished. "Ellen!" cried the millionaire.

The young lady who had been writing when I entered the room got to her feet and faced us. "Yes, father."

She was beautiful both in face and form, rarely beautiful, and her voice sounded like a silver bell.

"This is Captain Granville," said Mr. Hardcastle. "Entertain him until I return! You'll excuse me, Captain?"

But he did not wait for an answer, nor did I make one because already I had forgotten him. Miss Hardcastle approached me with an indescribably graceful undulating gait. She was tall—and fashioned according to no ungenerous mould, but yet so perfect were her proportions that she seemed to be rather small than large. My first impression was of a Madonna face—holy, grave and serious. But that was because her eyes were cast down. Next second they opened wide; great, eloquent eyes, brown and most unfriendly. Then I noticed her chin—it was strong and resolute, though her mouth was exquisitely kind.

Pausing three paces from where I stood, she bowed to me with slow and stately grace; she then indicated a chair, and sank into another herself.

I muttered, "How d'ye do."

Without removing her eyes from my face, she pointed to the distant grate where a bright fire was burning.

"It is warm and comfortable here," she said, "but, oh, so cold and bleak outside. There are people in England starving to-night, Captain Granville."

I thought of the people I had seen that afternoon and involuntarily shivered. "And bread is sixpence a loaf," I said, musingly. The second after I could have bitten off my tongue in remorse for my thoughtless speech, but it was too late. Miss Hardcastle flushed and drew back haughtily.

"I take shame for that!" she exclaimed, "but the fault is not mine."

"God forbid!" I cried. "I did not mean——" But she cut my protestation short.

"I heard you tell my father, sir, that you have a million pounds to spare. I heard you suggest to him that he should use it for a certain purpose."

"That is true, Miss Hardcastle."

"Ah!" She looked at me fixedly, with a sort of horror in her eyes that she made no effort to conceal. "So you are one of those men—monsters—who, already rich beyond the dreams of avarice, wish to swell their useless stores by starving, murdering the most helpless of your fellow creatures." Her voice sank to a whisper and her eyes conveyed a terrible accusation. "*Women, children, babes!*" she said.

I was overwhelmed with astonishment to hear such words from the trust magnate's daughter—but also I felt indignant at being so addressed.

"Do I look a murderer?" I asked.

"No," she replied. "But—does my father?"

"You surely except him."

Her eyes narrowed. "If he succeeds in his plans—God help England!" she replied.

"Is he so hard?"

She stood up. "Yes—but you—you are an Englishman; will you help him to ruin your country?"

I was about to utter a passionate denial, but as the words trembled on my tongue I saw the door behind her slightly move. Instantly suspecting a trap, I shrugged my shoulders and answered quietly, "You must excuse me, Miss Hardcastle, but I am a man of business—and er—don't you think you take rather an emotional view of the case?"

"Quite right!" thundered the voice of Mr. Hardcastle—and he entered the room as he spoke. "That is what I have told my daughter a hundred times!"

"So," thought I, "it was a trap," and I looked at the lady. But her expression smothered the suspicion. She gave me a glance so contemptuous and yet so profoundly sad that I was thrilled to my very marrow. "Great heaven!" I cried to myself, "is it possible that so noble a woman can be the daughter of so base a man?"

I said aloud, "Business is business, Mr. Hardcastle."

Miss Hardcastle swept towards the door, cold and stately as an icicle, but before she reached it her father cried out, "Ellen."

She paused and looked back. "Yes, father."

"Where are you going?"

"With Mrs. Hardcastle to the theatre."

"No!" he said, commandingly; "no more nocturnal ramblings, my dear. The streets are growing dangerous. Send your mother to me."

Evidently this man ruled his family with a rod of iron, for Miss Hardcastle obeyed without hesitation, almost meekly. I flew to the door and opened it for her. She passed me with averted face. She did not return, but a moment later Mrs. Hardcastle entered the room. She was a handsome, but rather poorly-preserved, woman of thirty-five or six, egotistical, vain and shallow, a somewhat ponderous coquette. A few compliments and enquiries as to her children, of whom

she was evidently proud, put us on the best of terms. We chatted for half-an-hour, during which Mr. Hardcastle only intermittently favoured us with his company, for every few moments he was called from the room by the curt announcement "Cable, sir!"

At the end of that time the trust magnate coolly dismissed his wife and suggested to me a game of picquet, an invitation that I accepted gladly. We played by arrangement until midnight, when I arose, my pockets lightened of seven hundred pounds of my master's money. Mr. Hardcastle was a cheerful winner. He shook me vigorously by the hand and said—

"Good-night, Captain. I enjoyed the game immensely. Dine with me *en famille* to-morrow night, eight sharp, and afterwards we'll play again."

"And concerning business?" I asked.

"I have already cabled your proposition to my partners. You have credentials, I suppose."

"I shall produce them to you to-morrow."

"Good!" said he, and I left him.

IV.

Mr. Vigorous Daunt made me relate every detail of what had passed, and confess every impression of what had occurred to me. Afterwards he said—

"H'm! A man of steel—but the girl belongs to her dead mother, even in name. We must not hurt her. H'm! H'm! You have done well, Granville, but to-morrow night you must recover that seven hundred pounds. Now go to bed!"

I was thankful for the permission and in a few moments I slept. But in spite of my weariness I dreamed always of those lean, hungry faces I had seen in the East End.

The following day I spent at various clubs, but no one seemed able to converse on anything but the bread trust. I was bored to death. I saw nothing of my master until late in the evening when I was dressing for dinner. He entered in a whirl and thrust into my hands a letter signed by the manager of the Bank of England. It was addressed to me, and ran as follows:—

DEAR SIR,—I beg to inform you that I have been instructed by Mr. Vigorous Daunt to honour your drafts to the extent of £2,500,000 (two million five hundred thousand pounds).

"That should satisfy our quarry as to your *bona fides*," said Mr. Daunt.

"Ay—but suppose he takes me on the hop—and accepts you as a partner."

"In that case propose conditions that will create delay."

"I see. What have you been doing all day?"

"Storing supplies in the Dial Street house, and feeding the poor."

He hurried off—where, I could not guess, and I sauntered to Mr. Hardcastle's door. The magnate was in his drawing-room, alone, and I immediately presented him with the banker's letter.

Mr. Hardcastle read it, nodding gravely. Returning it to me he said, "Not enough, Captain, not even by half—if you want to be a full partner."

"Ah—how much would be required for that?"

"Judge for yourself. Mackellar, Wallis, Herne, Gillies and Porsberg have each put up seven millions."

"And you?"

"I have a controlling interest," he answered, pompously.

"I shall communicate at once with Mr. Daunt," said I.

"No need," he retorted. "On the 30th I leave here for Paris to meet my partners. I can see Mr. Daunt there myself. You might let him know."

"Certainly I shall do that. Will you be absent long?"

The trust magnate smiled inscrutably. "I don't propose to return to London," he replied.

"Indeed! May I ask why?"

"Waal!" he drawled, affectedly, "my name will be mud here soon—and I guess I'll be safer across the Channel."

"Ah! Then bread will shortly take another rise?"

"You have struck it," said Mr. Hardcastle. "But let's drop shop and eat; dinner is waiting!"

The millionaire's dinner party was a constrained and dreary function. A poor conversationalist himself, he nevertheless demanded the attention of all. I was curtly presented to his two younger daughters, pretty little girls, and his son, a boy of seven. Afterwards these juniors did not open their lips except to eat; but at that I should not have been displeased were it not for the evident awe with which they regarded their father. Mrs. Hardcastle chatted brightly at intervals, but her manner was nervous, and

her talk entirely frivolous. Miss Hardcastle sat like a statue, and though she bowed to me when we met she resolutely declined to be drawn into conversation, and replied to all my attempts with monosyllables. Not once did she meet my eyes.

After dinner the children were taken away by their mother, presumably to bed, and as the millionaire was called to his office on some business, I was left for a moment in the drawing-room alone with Miss Hardcastle.

On impulse I approached her, and said, "Miss Hardcastle, you disapprove of me!"

She looked up startled, and at last our eyes met. "Yes," she said, "you know why."

"Then why do you countenance your father's operations?"

"I do not," she answered, simply. "I would do anything to move him from his purpose."

"Anything?" I repeated, meaningly.

"Yes!"

"But you cannot?"

"No—his heart—ah, but his heart is of stone!"

"If—if one were to move that heart of stone?"

"Impossible!"

"For the sake of argument, say possible—would you assist?"

Her great eyes glowed—"With my heart's blood!" she cried.

"Will you help me?"

"No!"

"Why?"

"I do not trust you!"

Speaking, she gave me a glance so honest, so disdainful and so melancholy that I was cut to the quick.

"You are unjust!" I muttered, angrily. But she left me like a queen in coldest dignity, and I swore to myself that I should not rest until she had repented of her words. But I was obliged to recognise her frank nobility of character, and though I bitterly felt her injustice, I could not think of her with anything but admiration. That night I won eleven hundred pounds from Mr. Hardcastle. He proved a bad loser and parted with his money with outspoken curses on his luck.

The next week passed without incident to me, for I was kept to the hotel by my master's orders, although he went out continually. But they were bad days for England. In all the great cities of the kingdom famine had attacked the poorer

classes. People were starving in hundreds, and already several riots had occurred. I gleaned all my news from the daily papers, for Mr. Daunt, who was maturing his plans, had put on an impregnable armour of reserve, and when we met only spoke to give me his commands, which were contained in three words: "Watch—listen—pump!"

All day long I played the spy on Mr. Hardcastle's apartments, mounting guard behind the door of my own room that I kept always slightly ajar. Mr. Daunt's fear was that the trust magnate should slip away and secretly leave England, and so I was obliged to scrutinise every soul who visited or left his rooms.

Every evening I visited the magnate and played cards with him, winning and losing by turns. It became an established custom. Sometimes Miss Hardcastle remained in the room while we played, but she seldom spoke to me, though whenever I looked up I was sure to meet her eyes. She was watching me, I think.

On the evening of November 29th the magnate bade me farewell. "I leave London to-morrow morning," he said. "Perhaps you will accompany me?"

But I had my orders from Mr. Daunt. "Thanks," I replied, "I should like to, but I must stay here yet a few days. You won't forget to look up Mr. Daunt. He is at the Hotel de Louvre."

"I'll not forget."

"You will be accompanied by your family, I suppose?"

"Of course! Good-bye!"

We shook hands and I made my way to my master's room. Mr. Daunt was pacing up and down in a state of feverish excitement. But immediately he saw me he grew calm.

"They leave to-morrow morning," I announced.

My master nodded. "Good!" he muttered; "the time has come to act. Wait here!" He darted into his bedroom, where I heard him stamping about for some minutes. Then the door opened and on the threshold stood a figure that made me cry out with astonishment. A hirsute, fat and ponderous Dutchman confronted me; his head was covered with a great brown bell-topper, under whose rim peeped a wealth of greasy, yellow curls. His chin was sunk upon his massive chest. In one hand he held a large paper-covered bundle, in the other he carried an enormous pipe, at which



he drew composedly. His eyes blinked at me through horned spectacles; his coat tails almost reached the floor.

"Will I do?" asked Mr. Daunt's voice.

"You are an artist!" I cried, admiringly.

"Your disguise is perfect."

"What is the time?" he demanded.

I glanced at my watch. "Five minutes past twelve! What do you propose to do?"

My master looked me in the eyes. "I am about to sacrifice my private revenge for the sake of England," he replied.

"God bless you, sir," I cried in heartfelt admiration. "You are going to fight the trust."

"With its own weapons," he said, smiling strangely. "Listen. My name is Van Sommeren. I arrived here to-night from Amsterdam. I have taken a room down the passage on this floor. I am going to it now, but not to sleep. In five minutes the hotel will be on fire—not really, but on smoke. In ten minutes I shall return here, giving the alarm as I come. You will rush out and awaken your friends, the Hardcastles. The rest is for me. Now open the door and see if the coast is clear!"

I obeyed, trembling with excitement. "The corridor is deserted," I whispered.

My master, without a word, slipped out and marched softly down the passage.

V.

I shut the door behind Mr. Daunt, and sat down to wait for the prescribed signal, my nerves on edge. My watch informed me of nine lagging minutes, but each one appeared an age. Suddenly I heard a wild, but distant, cry:—

"Fire! Fire! Fire!"

I rushed into the corridor. It was filled with smoke and resounded with the noise of approaching footsteps. "Fire! Fire! Fire!" screamed the voice of Mr. Daunt.

I darted to Mr. Hardcastle's door and thundered on the panels. Already the building was in an uproar. Mr. Daunt passed me, running like a hare and screaming as he ran. The door presently opened and a servant's frightened face appeared. "Fire! Fire!" I shouted. "Awaken your master instantly, the ladies and the children. The hotel is ablaze!"

With the speed of magic, Mr. Hardcastle, in dressing-gown and slippers, followed by a crowd of half-clad clerks, secretaries and servants, hurried out into the corridor. The

smoke now was very dense and choking. Figures loomed up through the haze seemingly double their natural size, and all Bedlam seemed to be let loose. I seized the trust magnate's arm. He seemed completely dazed, and stood like a stock. "Your family! Save the children!" I shouted.

He uttered a choking cry—"My son!"—and hurried back into his rooms. A moment later he reappeared followed by Mrs. and Miss Hardcastle, some female servants and his little girls. He was carrying the boy, pressed convulsively to his breast.

"To the street—to the street!" yelled a voice behind me, the voice of my master. A rush was made on the instant to the staircase. Panic seized on all, and the men, forgetting their manhood, fled yelling like madmen, fighting and scrambling to escape. I caught up Mr. Hardcastle's youngest daughter in my arms, and taking the other by the hand hurried after the crowd, closely followed by Miss Hardcastle and the magnate's wife. But the lights were suddenly extinguished and an awful howl went up. Next moment Pandemonium reigned supreme. Mrs. Hardcastle and the female servants shrieked and screamed, the children wailed; the men fighting at the staircase shouted and snarled. Then came a fearful falling shambling sound and a storm of curses. I struck a match and by its gleam beheld a dozen terror-maddened men rolling down the stairs. The staircase presently was clear. Lighting match after match I guided my *protégés* to the first floor and then down a second flight to the main hall of the building that opened on the street. Here was gathered a great crowd and the scene was brilliantly lit up. Mr. Hardcastle's cowardly servants, already stricken with shame, on seeing the ladies, came to meet us. Mr. Daunt was not to be seen, but Mr. Hardcastle was lying on a couch, stunned and apparently insensible. His wife flew to his side at once, and I, giving my charges to Miss Hardcastle, searched with my eyes for the boy. But, like my master, he had vanished.

Satisfied of this, I returned to Miss Hardcastle and was about to address her when a hotel official came running down the stairs, and halting at the foot, shouted out—assuring us that the alarm of fire was false and that the smoke had been caused by a mass of chemicals burning in the grate of a visitor's room. Others immediately confirmed this assurance and within a few minutes something



farewell to Miss Hardcastle she offered me for the first time her hand, and her eyes were for the first time kind to me.

"I shall never forget your goodness," she said, softly.

I could not reply because I was overwhelmed with shame, and I thought, too, of the sorrow she would experience a little later.

There was no rest for me that night. I had barely entered my room when Mr. Hardcastle's secretary rushed after me. The boy had been missed. I assisted in the search with him.

Mr. Hardcastle's tale was a wild one. He had been attacked in the dark while carefully groping his way through the smoke, and struck insensible as he reached the foot of the first flight of stairs, and the boy had been wrenched from him by his assailant, who then fled. Nevertheless, we searched the whole building room by room, but without result. The trust magnate rushed about offering enormous rewards, and behaving like a maniac.

I left him at last interviewing the police in the office of the hotel. Morning had already dawned. I found Mr. Daunt seated before the blazing asbestos gas fire in his bedroom, smoking a cigarette.

He looked up and said irrelevantly, "She is the image of her mother, Granville."

"Miss Hardcastle?" I cried.

"Yes!" His eyes of a sudden gleamed. "I have a good mind to marry her!" he said.

I was spellbound. "You—marry her!" I gasped.

"Why not?" he answered, coolly.

I shook my head. "An incongruity," I muttered. "Where is the boy?"

"At the house in Dial Street, bound and gagged. After stunning his father, I put him into an immense carpet bag and took him to Whitechapel by stages in seven different cabs. They will never trace us."

"Poor child!" I muttered. "What is the next step?"

"After breakfast you must bid the Hardcastles good-bye, and then hey for our new home."

"Our new home," I repeated stupidly, "where is that?"

"At the house in Dial Street, of course! Where are your wits? Considering Ellen Hardcastle, I suppose."

I started back and looked him in the eyes. "What do you mean by that?" I cried.

"What I say. Dare you tell me that you have met that woman daily for a week without falling victim to her quiver?"

"Yes!"

He stood up and approached me, his eyes glittering—"On your honour, Granville—man to man!"

For the first time I hesitated. Something possessed me. I wanted to repeat my protestation, but could not.

"You love her!" cried my jealous little master, in a voice of fury.

"No."

"Are you sure?"

A light swam before my eyes. As in a vision I saw again Miss Hardcastle as she had appeared when she said—"I shall never forget your goodness, Captain Granville!"

"Confound you!" I cried suddenly. "Because you have fallen in love at sight, don't conclude that I am in my dotage, too!" The evasion saved me further persecution. Mr. Daunt bit his lips, then burst out laughing. "All right, my boy," he said, "I'll pay you for that." And to my joy he changed the conversation.

VI.

At nine o'clock, I called upon Mr. Hardcastle. I was admitted immediately. His wife and Miss Hardcastle were with him. He looked very ill, old, careworn and haggard. Mrs. Hardcastle was weeping, and even the young lady seemed deeply moved. I hastily stated my business, anxious to be gone, but the trust magnate, instead of saying good-bye, thrust a letter into my hands.

"It came by the post," he said. "Read."

The letter was undated and unsigned. It was written in an evidently disguised hand, and ran:—

MONSTER,—Your son shall suffer the same privations as the poorest wretch in England until you loose your talons from the people's food. Your actions shall guide mine.

"An eye for an eye. A tooth for a tooth."

I looked at the millionaire, and marvelled to see that his face was set in an expression of inflexible determination.

"What will you do?" I asked.

He answered through closed teeth. "I shall reply to that threat with deeds, not words. Look in to-morrow morning's papers."

"Do you leave London as you intended to-day?"

"No."

Here Mrs. Hardcastle broke into wails. "Oh, my boy, my boy!" she cried. "They will torture him. They will kill him! I shall never see him alive again!"

Those cries pierced my heart, and though the magnate silenced his wife with a single look, I could endure no more. Taking a hasty leave, I hurried from the room, but in the passage I encountered Ellen Hardcastle, who had escaped by another door.

She gave me both her hands. "Help us!" she said, and tears were in her eyes.

Feeling a hypocrite to the core, I answered, "Yes," then kissed her hands in reverent contrition.

An hour later my master and I entered our new abode, the house in Dial Street. My duty was to act as gaoler to the child, for Mr. Daunt's hatred of the father embraced the son, and he refused to see his prisoner.

The trust magnate's son was a bright and winsome little lad, and he soon made friends with me. I treated him as well as possible under the circumstances, but they were harsh, unhappily for him. It was above all things necessary to keep his presence in that house unsuspected by any, therefore each time I left him I was obliged to gag the poor boy and bind him to the bed, but those were his only sufferings. Mr. Daunt, it is true, ordered me to starve him, but that I could not do, and for the first time I deceived my master, and without remorse.

The next day's papers informed the world that the price of bread in the United Kingdom would thenceforth be one shilling a loaf. Such was the magnate's stern reply to the hidden enemy who had kidnapped his son. But the fact that the magnate's son had been kidnapped was not publicly announced. I searched every paper, but no word of that calamity appeared in any. Evidently Mr. Hardcastle had determined to conceal his domestic trouble from the world, perhaps in order to prevent hope from entering the people's hearts.

The public history of the days that followed is known to the whole world. On December 2nd, four hundred London bakers' shops were closed, their owners having been already ruined. On December 10th, riots occurred all over the kingdom. The Government entered into negotiations with the trust magnate, and it is said attempted to purchase his complaisance. On the 11th of that fatal month a starving

mob consisting of two hundred thousand men and women invaded the West End, and wrecked scores of shops before they were dispersed. On the 12th a mob attacked the Hotel Continental with the frantic idea of seizing and lynching the trust magnate. The military were called out, and two hundred rioters were killed in the struggle.

On the 13th, surely the blackest day in England's history, the price of bread was raised to 2s. 6d. per loaf. An armed mob attacked the Bank of England, and martial law was proclaimed in London. On that night a return was tabled in the House of Commons stating that six million people in Great Britain and Ireland were in daily receipt of Government relief, and that 12,000 had actually perished of starvation.

My master, his prisoner and I had then been lying a whole fortnight in hiding in the house in Dial Street, but though hidden we had not been idle. Mr. Daunt each day privately communicated with the Government, and forwarded a cheque for £100,000 for the relief of the starving poor, and each night, too, we posted a letter to the trust magnate calculated to harrow his heart and bend his will if he possessed the feelings of a father.

But at last it became convincingly apparent that Mr. Hardcastle had resolved to sacrifice his son to his ambition, and on December 16th we despaired to move him. That afternoon we left the house and walked abroad together. The main streets were quiet because in the occupation of the military, but the side streets, lanes and by-ways were thronged with groaning people, and were the scenes of incomparable misery. Business was entirely suspended, stores of every kind were closed and shuttered, and the traffic consisted entirely of omnibuses and hearses, and a few carts. My master and I, clad like ordinary artisans, passed about without exciting notice, but our hearts were heavy within us at the sights we were obliged to witness. England had already suffered at the hands of one man more than she might have done from the march of a devastating army of invasion.

At last I turned to Mr. Daunt. "Let us go back!" I said; "I can't bear any more!"

My partner's face was grey. He pointed to the sky.

"A fog!" I cried.

"Thank God!" said he—and we hurried homewards.

I shall never forget my master's expression when next I saw his face. His jaws were locked together, and there was a fiend in his eyes.

"You have a plan!" I cried.

"Dress!" he commanded. "Dress quickly in evening clothes—we are about to call on Salem Hardcastle!"

In ten minutes I was ready; but my master took much longer to prepare himself. He came at last, however, and if I had not known the thing to be impossible I should have thought Mr. Hardcastle himself was before me. Even so I could not repress a cry, so startling was the likeness.

"To the child!" said Mr. Daunt. "Go first and remove his gag, but do not free him!"

I did as I was commanded, and the next moment Mr. Daunt entered the room. At sight of him the boy uttered an enraptured cry.

"Father, father!" he shouted.

Mr. Daunt stared at his prisoner and then at me. "Traitor!" he said. He took a lozenge from his pocket and put it into the boy's mouth. "Eat!" he commanded, and the child obeyed.

He turned to me. "Gag him again!" I did so.

"Now follow me!"

VII.

Two hours later we stood in the porch of the Hotel Continental, having made our way thither through the soldiers by virtue of an order that my all-foreseeing master had procured from the Government, for under martial law no one was permitted to journey from one district to another after nightfall.

A company of infantry with fixed bayonets was stationed before the doors of the hotel—but these, on the production of our order, permitted us to pass. The hotel servants recognised us instantly. Mr. Daunt they took of course for the trust magnate, and he was favoured with glances of open hate. We climbed the stairs and marched straight to Mr. Hardcastle's rooms, my master in advance. At the first door he knocked softly, and it was opened by the secretary himself. The man started back in amazement, but my master put his finger to his lips. "Hush!" he whispered—"not a word."

The astonished secretary stepped aside and we entered the anteroom, closing the door behind us. Two other men were there,

evidently on guard, for they were armed with pistols. They looked blankly surprised on seeing us.

"Where is my wife?" whispered Mr. Daunt.

"In her room, sir," replied the secretary.

"And my daughter?"

"I—I—thought she was with you at dinner, sir."

"Good. Stay here! Permit no one to enter. Come, Granville!"

We advanced into the drawing-room, which was deserted. Mr. Daunt closed the door of the anteroom and locked it with infinite and noiseless care.

"I have timed the matter well," he muttered in my ear. "Now for business!"

He drew a revolver from his pocket and put it at full cock. "Lead me to the dining-room!" he commanded—"Softly—Granville—softly."

I crossed the apartment on tip-toe and gently pushed open the proper door, which was happily ajar.

The trust magnate was seated at the head of the table, Miss Hardcastle on his left hand. Behind the magnate's chair stood a portly butler. No other person was in the room. Miss Hardcastle looked deathly ill—she was toying with some fruit and staring straight before her with unseeing eyes; evidently dinner was almost over. The deepest silence reigned. Mr. Hardcastle was sipping at a glass of some liqueur. He looked much the same as ever, but there were new lines graven deep about his eyes, and his mask-like face was disfigured with an unhealthy yellow-tinted pallor.

We stared at them a while, ourselves unseen, then Mr. Daunt drew back and glanced at me. "I'm afraid we'll have to take the girl as well," he breathed. "You must manage the waiter. Stun him! Here, take this!" He handed me a small leaden-knobbed club.

I nodded. Mr. Daunt made an urgent sign—and in obedience I threw the door wide open and marched into the room.

"What, Granville!" cried the magnate.

Miss Hardcastle's eyes dilated and her pale cheeks were flooded with a sudden colour.

"Captain Granville!" she exclaimed and started to her feet. They both gazed spell-bound at my companion, who, pushing past me, marched straight up to his enemy and thrust the revolver in his face.

"One word of alarm," muttered my master, "and you die!"



I watched the trust magnate keenly. After a long breathless second there came into his eyes a look of dreadful fear and hate and perfect recognition.

"Oh! Oh!" he said, and suddenly groaned out "My son, my son!"

At that moment something made me look at Miss Hardcastle. She was swaying to and fro. I sprang forward and clasped her in my arms. In time, for she had swooned. I bore her to a couch, then forced myself to leave her, for the crisis was at hand.

"Will you come with me?" asked Mr. Daunt.

The magnate's eyes had grown bloodshot, his face was the hue of lead.

"You will murder me in any case."

"No!"

"Swear it."

"Ay—by the memory of Ellen Greaves. I'd keep no other oath with you. Now give me the pistol in your pocket."

The magnate obeyed, then tottered to his feet. "I must get my hat and coat," he muttered.

Mr. Daunt laughed grimly and tossed him a cap. "You must do without a coat!" he said. "Now lead on—and remember at the first sign of treachery I shall blow your brains out."

VIII.

But the trust magnate was a beaten man. He led us to the anteroom and through his servants without a word, even brushing aside his astonished secretary, who sought to bar his progress. In the same silence we descended the stairs, departed from the hotel and gained the street. A soldier procured us a four-wheeler and in this we were whirled off towards our destination, along the Strand. After frequent stoppages to satisfy the various sentries of the legality of our errand we passed through Whitechapel and entered the more famine-smitten quarters of the city. On leaving the main thoroughfares our progress was slower than ever, for although the fog had lifted, the narrow, ill-lit streets were thronged with people who made way for us grudgingly and with sullen execrations.

Here for the first time my master broke the silence. "If those people were to learn your name, my enemy," he muttered, "they would tear you limb from limb."

Mr. Hardcastle's shudderings shook the carriage, but he spoke no word. The night

was full of sighs and groans and wails. These rose to a hideous pitch at intervals, then sank into an awful stillness, only to be renewed again and again.

When finally we reached our destination we had to carry out our prisoner, for he was half inanimate. Mr. Daunt ordered the driver of the cab to wait. Once within the house he revived his enemy with kicks, then turning to me, said curtly, "Wait here, but when I call bring this loving father to witness the tortures he has inflicted on his son."

We waited in breathless silence for a period that seemed interminable. Once a childish scream resounded through the building; afterwards all was still. Mr. Hardcastle shivered like a man taken with ague. On hearing his son's cry he threw out his hands and his lurid eyes implored mine. But I could not pity him. "He is only one of thousands and your victims all!" I said sternly.

"Granville!" shouted my master at last.

The trust magnate uttered a groan of relief and tottered to the door. We climbed the stairs and, guided by the light, entered the prison chamber.

The magnate's son was lying silent upon a plank bedstead, covered with a filthy ragged blanket. The boy was either in a drugged sleep, or insensible from pain, for his eyes were closed. A dirty bandage was tied round his head. His face was that of a living skeleton, for every bone seemed, in the dim candlelight, to stand out in bold relief from dark blue interlining cavities.

My master stood close beside him, holding in one hand his revolver, while his other fist was tightly clenched.

Mr. Hardcastle stood for a moment spell-bound—then with a blood-curdling shriek he sprang towards his son, but at the second step he was met with the muzzle of my master's pistol.

"Back!" said Mr. Daunt. "Back! Back!"

"My boy! My boy!" groaned the magnate as, shuddering violently, he buried his face in his hands to hide the fearful sight that attracted his eyes against his will. "Spare him! For God's sake, spare him!" he wailed.

"Not until we have come to terms."

"What do you want?"

"First you must sign a paper that I have prepared confessing your sole authorship and guilt of the crime for which I suffered

six-and-twenty years ago." Mr. Daunt gnashed his teeth and hissed out the words like a spitting serpent.

The trust magnate bent his head before that storm. "Yes," he muttered, "yes."

"Afterwards—you will return to your hotel and instantly efface—as far as may be—the ruin you have caused in this fair land! You must pay, moreover, by way of fine, a portion of your illgotten profits—say £4,000,000—to the British Government to-morrow morning."

"Ah!" The trust magnate raised his head and eyed his enemy with looks of fierce hate. But Mr. Daunt returned his stare with interest and coldly said: "If you fail in this and if in three days' time the price of bread has not fallen to its normal level your son shall die. This I swear by the Almighty!"

"But—but afterwards—you will restore him to me?"

"Only when I am satisfied of your good faith—when your cursed trust is dead."

"How can I trust you?"

"As best you may. Choose, but choose quickly. Your son has eaten nothing since yesterday at noon!"

"I agree to anything! anything!" The magnate was shivering like a leaf. "Only give him to me!"

But my master, with a cruel snarl, raised his pistol and drove the magnate before him from the room and down the stairs.

I picked up the boy and, carrying him, followed them.

In the dining-room the trust magnate signed the confession that my master had spoken of and immediately afterwards we left the house and all entered the four-wheeler, I still carrying the child.

As the carriage started, Mr. Hardcastle, in a strained and intense voice, asked—"Where are you going with me?"

"Wait, and you shall see," replied my master.

For long thereafter nothing was to be heard but the trundling of the wheels and the occasional broken lamentations of the famished populace. At length, however, we left the slums and entered the Commercial Road. Here we were presently halted by a patrol, and my master produced his invaluable order.

"How far to the next picket?" he asked the soldier, who returned him the document.

"Half-a-mile."

"Thanks! Drive on," said Mr. Daunt.

But before a quarter-of-a-mile was traversed my master stopped the carriage, and opening the door compelled the trust magnate to alight.

"I leave you now to your own devices," he said, coolly. "Good-night to you."

"But I have no pass. I shall be arrested!" cried Mr. Hardcastle.

"Without doubt," responded Mr. Daunt, "but that is what I wish; you will certainly spend the night in gaol. Meanwhile, we shall make good our escape, and cover our tracks as well—not that I fear you, for I do not believe that there is a man in England who would raise his hand to serve you. Whip up your horse, driver!"

We left the magnate stranded in the middle of the road, furious with rage, but helpless as a babe. Half-an-hour later we alighted at Trafalgar Square, and dismissed the cabman with a liberal tip. Thence we walked to our rooms at The Colonnade Hotel—our home whenever we were in London.

Mr. Vigorous Daunt had not really tortured the trust magnate's son. The lozenge which he had obliged the child to eat in my presence contained a powerful opiate that had induced insensibility. For the rest, the boy's famished and skeleton-like appearance had been produced by nothing more terrible than a skilful application of coloured chalks. But that mummery served its purpose well. On the following day, December 17th, Mr. Salem Hardcastle, to the astonishment and consternation of the universe, placed the enormous sum of £4,000,000 at the unreserved disposal of the British Government for the relief of those who had most suffered by his trust—and moreover he announced in the evening papers the immediate relinquishment of his infernal war against humanity.

Two days later bread fell in price from 2s. 6d. to 3d. a loaf, and the Wheat Trust, an organisation the most monstrous and evilly powerful that the world has ever known, came to an end.

On the afternoon of December 24th I called, at my master's command, on Mr. Hardcastle, and informed him that Mr. Daunt would deliver up his son to his eldest daughter, but to no other person. Miss Hardcastle thereupon accompanied me to the Colonnade Hotel, and we resigned her brother to her care as safe and well as on the day that he had been kidnapped.



















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THE HISTORY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON



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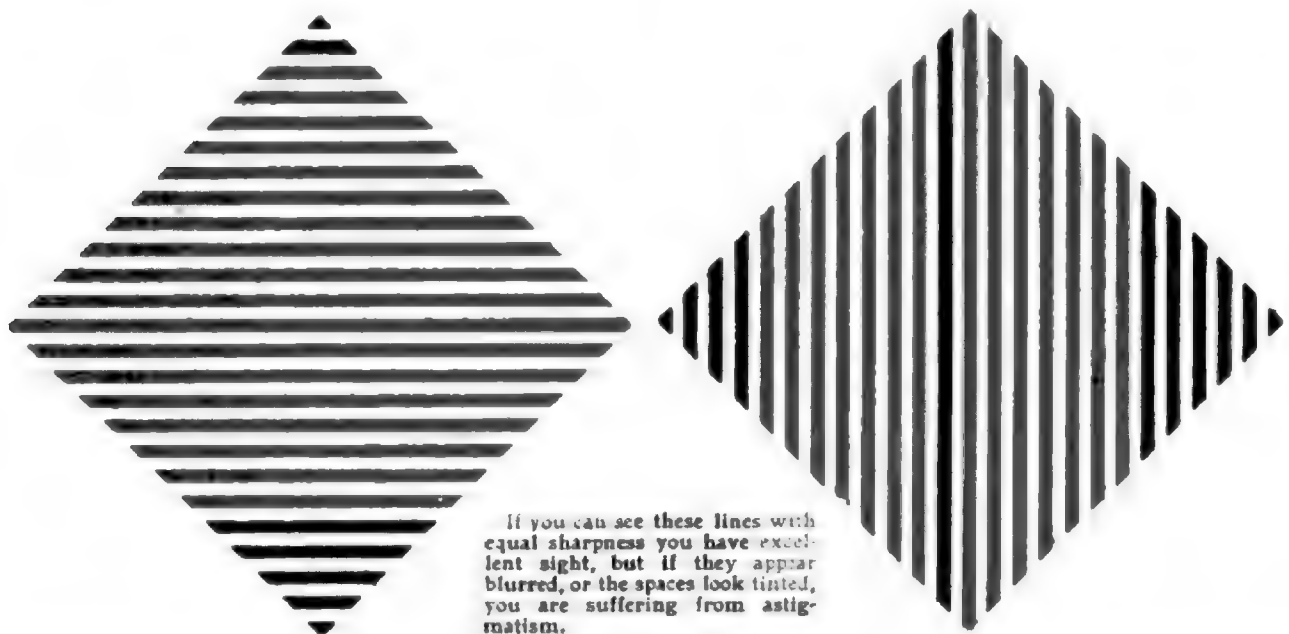
as a coloured band around the pupil, whose aperture is seen to be small in the sunshine and large in a dull light. By standing before a mirror and alternately approaching and withdrawing a lighted candle, the changes in the size of the aperture can be easily watched.

But although the eye and the camera so closely correspond in general structure, yet there is a vital distinction between them. The eye sees, but the camera does not. The latter is non-sentient, and merely receives and records one definite impression received on the sensitised plate during the time that it is exposed to the action of light. The eye does much more. It not only receives on the retina—corresponding to the sensitive plate—an endless series of impressions of all that goes on within its field of view, but it

colour, it is evident that we should get a reproduction of the embroidered picture. In much the same way the optic nerve conveys to the brain the impressions received on the retina. Strictly speaking, it is the brain, and not the eye, that sees.

Now it is evident to any thoughtful person that the more delicate the machine, the greater the necessity for keeping it in good order. Cleanliness and care are all-important in such a case.

The eye will soon become impaired if not properly cared for. The lens must be kept clear and perfect, the adjusting muscles must be in good working order, the retina must retain its sensitiveness, and the optic nerve must convey its messages to the brain with the utmost speed and accuracy. Nature har-



telegraphs them to the eye in the form of a continuous stream of visual information. The optic nerve, which connects the eye with the brain, is the telegraph wire along which a constant stream of impressions is conveyed.

How this is accomplished is illustrated in the following manner. Suppose we have in a frame an embroidered picture, composed of a vast number of stitches in coloured silks, and that from the back of each of these stitches a wire passes, which is capable of telegraphing its particular colour. Let all these wires be combined into a cable which passes into another room, where the wires are spread out and arranged in a frame corresponding to that at the other end. If each wire then simultaneously telegraphed its own point of

provided for all necessary repairs and lubrication, and we have only to co-operate with her in order to retain our sight in full efficiency.

We are not forgetting that the eye is liable to sundry troubles which are not due to neglect or misuse on the part of the patient, and which call for all the knowledge and skill of the oculist and surgeon for their removal. But in nineteen out of every twenty cases of defective vision, the fault lies largely or wholly with the patient himself.

One of the commonest causes of failing sight is overstrain. In many cases this is due to neglect to wear spectacles when the condition of the eye calls for it—a matter about which we shall have something to say presently—but there are scores of cases



An extremely common mistake is to sit facing the lamp at night. The result is that the full glare of the light falls upon the unprotected eyes, while the book is illuminated in a less degree. Then the eyes are fatigued, and at the same time the letterpress is seen through a glare which renders it less distinct.

The correct position is to sit with the light behind one, so that it shines directly over the shoulder upon the book, while the eyes are in complete shadow. Many persons prefer a light above the head, in which case the eyes are to some extent protected by the brows and eyelashes.

When it is unavoidable to have the light in front—as is often the case in business offices, where two rows of clerks sit facing one another—the light should be placed as low down as practicable, and fitted with a shade so adjusted as to protect the eyes from the direct rays. Failing this, a light shade can be worn over the eyes, and attached to the head with spring clips.

School children are sadly addicted to crouching over their lessons, with the light brought as close to their faces as possible. This not only causes short sight, but tends to impair the vision generally. Everyone should sit well back when reading, and hold the book at a convenient height and angle.

It would seem hardly necessary to caution people against reading when the light is insufficient, but nothing is more common than to find economical folk postponing the lighting of the gas till long after it is needed, and trying to read by firelight, or with the

book held close to the window pane. Overstrained eyes and impaired vision are the inevitable results of such false economy.

Another very mischievous practice is to read small print in the train or omnibus. Not only is the light often insufficient, but the shaking of the vehicle causes the lines to dance before the eyes, which are overtaxed in the endeavour to distinguish the words amid the general blur on the page. This can to some extent be remedied by holding a piece of white paper or card on

the page, so as to cover the line below the one being read. This reduces the apparent blur by about a third, but the better method is not to attempt to read small type when travelling.

Persons whose eyes have any tendency to become weak should never sleep with their faces turned towards a window, especially if it catches the early morning sun. Not only is sleep frequently disturbed by the strong light shining on the face, but the eyelids are insufficient to protect the eyes from the glare. In most rooms it is not difficult to arrange the bed so that the sleeper

may lie with his back towards the window.

Many persons are fond of sitting in the twilight, and even in the darkness that follows. This is harmless enough in itself, and may afford the eyes a useful rest. But the mischief comes when the lights are suddenly turned on, and the unfortunate eyes have to face the change from semi-darkness to a dazzling glare. Little wonder that intense pain often follows. It is Nature's way of giving us a caution.

No. 1.—*Pearl.*

The absurd prejudice that some people have against the use of glasses, influenced by their regard for their personal appearance, is indulged in at the ultimate cost of good

No. 2.—*Nonpareil.*

sight—or perhaps loss of useful vision. The earlier these refractive troubles are attended to, the less powerful the lens that has to be worn. This allows

No. 3.—*Brevier.*

a margin for future changes. But it is in view of the abnormal deviation from the healthy eye which must come as we advance

No. 4.—*Bourgeois.*

in life that the judicious use of glasses is of so much importance, preventing, as it does, congestive states of

No. 5.—*Small Pica.*

the eye, which tend to morbid changes, ending

No. 6.—*Pica.*

it may be, in glaucoma, or cataract.

No. 7.—*Great Primer.*

The wearing of shades over the

No. 8.—*Double Pica.*

both eyes: better that



In perfect vision, the smallest type should be read without difficulty at a distance of fifteen inches. If this cannot be done, suitable spectacles should be obtained without delay.





the eye is not spherical, but more or less cylindrical. In other words, instead of resembling a piece cut off the side of a marble, it is more like a slice from the side of a cork.

This gives rise to a curious imperfection in the vision. Lines are seen much more clearly in one position than in another. For instance, in the case of the present writer, the hands of a watch are seen perfectly at six o'clock, but they appear much less distinct at a quarter to three.

In testing for astigmatism, diagrams are used, consisting of parallel lines arranged at various angles. In perfect vision, all appear equally sharp and black; but if astigmatism is present some will appear faint, or tinted with brown or grey.

In slight cases, the ordinary vision is not greatly impaired, and the subject may be quite unconscious that anything is wrong; yet strain is constantly present, and more or less discomfort will be experienced sooner or later. Many a theatre headache is due, not, as is almost invariably imagined, to heat or lack of ventilation, but to unsuspected astigmatism.

To correct this error in vision, lenses of a cylindrical shape are required, and have to be arranged with their cylindricity at right angles to that of the eye. Such spectacles have always to be specially made, and their adjustment calls for the highest skill of the oculist and optician. It is absolutely impossible for an astigmatic person to derive any lasting benefit from spectacles chosen from stock; but it is by no means impossible for him to do further serious injury to, or completely destroy, his vision in this way.

It sometimes happens that the astigmatism is irregular, one part of the front of the

eye being more cylindrical than another, and in order to meet such cases the spectacle lenses have to be ground in most curious shapes.

It is not only necessary that the spectacles should be adapted to the vision: they must also fit the face. It is most important that the centres of the lenses should be exactly in front of the centres of the eyes, and in order to secure this the width of the eyes and the height and thickness of the nose have to be carefully taken into consideration.

When spectacles are worn, it is surely just as well to take care of them, yet many people treat them with utter neglect. Even the best lenses get scratched—though this does not occur so often with pebble ones—and then the clearness is impaired. Spectacles when not in use should always be kept in rigid cases, and the lenses should be frequently wiped with a piece of wash-leather, which is preferable to the usual silk handkerchief. Great care should also be taken that the frames do not get bent or damaged, with the probable result that the glasses no longer rest symmetrically before the eyes.

It may be well to observe in conclusion that good eyes are incomparably better than the best spectacles ever made, and the truly wise person will take the utmost care of his vision and seek to preserve it unimpaired. It is a foolish man who never gives a thought to his eyes until neglect has done its work, and he has to suffer for it.

We are indebted to Messrs. Curry and Paxton, Opticians, of Great Portland Street, W., for permission to reproduce the various diagrams for testing the sight, accompanying this article.

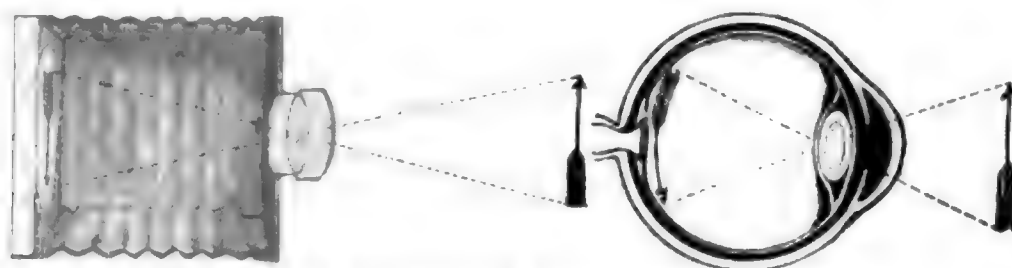


Diagram showing the similarity of the eye to a photographic camera.

WAS SHE WORTH IT?

DRAMATIC NEW NOVEL BY THE AUTHORS OF 'CONVICT 99,'

'THE STORY OF A GREAT SIN,' etc.

This story, which will be of the same length as the ordinary novel, will be completed in three parts, *i.e.*, the February, March and April issues.

CHAPTER I.

THE BLACK-LETTER NIGHT.

"HULLOA, Dartford, you here? Hadn't you better keep out of it to-night?"

The sporting major's card-room, in his house in Eaton Square, was bright with electric light, and alive with the voices of many men. The major's wife, Mrs. Vane, had already gone off to Nice for the winter, leaving her husband free to amuse himself as he pleased in his own house, unrestrained by any fettering sense of the respect due to her presence within its walls. And so the company in the card-room on this particular evening was numerous as well as socially select, and poker was in full swing.

"Hadn't you better keep out of it to-night, Dartford? It won't be safe for you to play."

Lord Dartford, the man thus somewhat anxiously spoken to, was a newcomer, having only just entered the room. He was a man of thirty-six or -seven years of age, noticeably handsome, with a warm, bright, open-hearted smile, an occasional gay laugh, and manners that were altogether charming. It was perhaps this handsomeness of feature and easy charm of manner which made him look younger than he was. He certainly looked almost boyish now as he advanced to meet the man who had greeted him.

"So you are warning me away, are you, Scruton? It's very kind of you, and I shall take your advice and go in a minute or two. I've only come in just to have a look round. Who's playing? Is that young Frank Somerton I see over there, playing with the major and two or three fellows whom I don't know?"

The other nodded.

"Yes. He's winning a bit, and it's a pity, because, when these young 'uns taste a bit of good luck, it's a case of having tasted blood. They become gamblers for the rest of their lives. Anyhow, it doesn't matter so much for him. The son of old Somerton, the banker, can afford to lose a pretty considerable amount. But it's different with you. You're the head of your family, Dartford, and a peer and all the rest of it, and you must keep a trifle in the way of money to come and go upon. You can't have too much left, as it is. You lost deuced heavily last week, you know, and if you lose any more it'll be a bad job."

Lord Dartford nodded, and his smiling face became more than a little grave.

"You're right, Scruton. I did lose heavily; very heavily indeed. We had unlimited poker, and the luck was dead against me all the time. You can imagine that my financial condition was considerably worse when I stopped playing than it had been when I began."

Scruton laughed grimly.

"If you keep on at that rate it may be a case of an American heiress. And you mightn't even get one of them to have you. They're very particular about money nowadays. What did your brother say about the matter—about your losses?"

"My brother, the financier?" Dartford laughed again. "Well, I didn't tell him about it. But he got to know somehow, for I'm told he's been sermonising about me, and holding me up as an example of everything a nobleman ought not to be. Come, now, let's go over there and see how Frank Somerton is getting on. I don't like to see a young subaltern playing like that, with all his heart in the game. It's bad for the Service."

"Better keep away, Dartford. Better keep clear out of it. You'll only get the gambling fever on you again."

But the viscount motioned him aside.

"I must go, for the young fellow's sake, Scruton. If I find him plunging ahead too rashly, I shall take him away. I don't care a straw about his father, but I know his sister wouldn't like him to be here."

And he crossed the room to the table at the other side, where the party, of which young Frank Somerton was a member, was playing.

"It's only limited, Dartford!" cried the red-faced master of the house, Major Vane, as he approached. "It's as mild as milk—only a ten-shilling ante and a ten-pound limit. Come on into it."

Dartford shook his head. "Thank you, major, no more risks for me. I had enough of them a night or two ago."

"Nonsense! You wouldn't lose anything worth counting at this way of doing it; not if you were to play all night."

Dartford still refused. He stood watching the game for some ten minutes, during which the boy, Frank Somerton, lost repeatedly. And then suddenly a repulsion came over him at the sight of the young fellow handling his cards and staking his money. Another moment, and Somerton had no more ready money left, and was calling out for a pencil and a slip of paper to write out an I.O.U. This was a bad sign, and Dartford touched him on the shoulder.

"Here, Frank, you'd better get out of it. You're in a bad vein. I'll take your hand."

Somerton rose, yielding with a grumble. The mischief was done. Directly Dartford had joined the party the major grew dissatisfied with the mildness of the game.

"This is confoundedly slow," he said, disgustedly. "Let's double the limit. Has anybody any objection?"

Nobody had any objection but Dartford, and as he was in the minority of one he was not listened to. The hand of fate seemed to be upon him. Forgetting Scruton's warnings, and the face of a woman who was his good angel, he yielded, and staked more money. And he began to win.

And then the demon of gambling seized once more upon his soul. He played eagerly, for sheer love of the cards. His luck slipped away from him as quickly and capriciously as it had come, and its slipping away goaded him to further rashness. The beautiful woman's face that was his life's star shone before his inner eye no more. He played until he and the major were the only ones left in. They raised each other until the amount of money in the pool had swelled to something very near seven hundred pounds. At last he threw down his hand with a half-suppressed oath. He had lost all that he had staked.

The madness of the fever was fairly in his blood now. A fierce desire to redeem his loss took possession of him. He made his second beginning by writing out an I.O.U. for five hundred pounds and pushing it forward. At the end of the game, not only this, but another five hundred on the top of it had been lost by him—raked in as plunder by the triumphant major.

"Come away, Dartford! Leave it now. You've had more than enough of it," remonstrated Scruton, coming up with a troubled face. "What's the use of dragging young Somerton out only to get caught again yourself?"

But Dartford thrust him back. "Get away, Scruton! You can't stop me now. And this is mere child's play up to the present. But I vote we play unlimited now."

He turned to the major. "Do you agree?"

Agree? The major was in the mood for anything. Besides, he was a wealthy man, and a few thousands more or less, let alone a few hundreds, made little difference to him, more especially as he won a good deal oftener than he lost.

"For the love of Heaven——!" interposed Scruton. But his remonstrance was of no avail. The two men at the table had ceased to be mere card players for money, and had become gamblers in the worst sense of the word.

The other men in the room sauntered up. Presently the whole company had gathered round the scene of the desperate contest. Some of them would have liked to have joined in, but none of them ventured, for in the frenzy of the two players hundreds had come to be held as naught, and the stakes were represented by thousands.

"Bring me a soda and whisky!" cried Dartford. His face had changed during the last quarter-of-an-hour; his eyes had become fierce and eager; his features seemed to have sharpened, and drops of cold sweat stood out upon his forehead. There was no hope at all now of that angel-face of the woman he loved shining brightly enough in his memory for its silent appeal to draw him aside from the mad course on which he was launched.

He swallowed his whisky and soda, and then wrote out and put upon the table an I.O.U. for ten thousand pounds. It was more than he had money at his bank to meet, but he tabled it as his last stake. The gambling demon in his soul whispered that he might get it all back with another ten thousand added. If he did not get it back—well, the gambling fever ran too high in him for him to care what would happen in that case. As for the woman who might care, he had in these moments utterly forgotten her. He played with the daring of a madman. But the red-faced major had bluff enough for a dozen, and beat him.

Half-an-hour afterwards Dartford made his way out of the card-room, walking blindly and staggeringly, like a drunken man. Scruton, who had grown very pale, went up to him to help him, seeing that he seemed hardly to know where he was going. He gripped his arm, but for the third time on this never-to-be-forgotten night Dartford thrust him away.

"Never mind me, Scruton, old boy. It's all over. You can't help me now. Better let me alone."

He went out alone, and Scruton knew that any casual person would not have recognised his face as that of the Lord Dartford who had entered the house earlier in the evening. He had no money left to pay for a cab, so he staggered along on foot in the direction of his chambers.

CHAPTER II.

GOOD-BYE! GOOD-BYE!

In spite of the late hours he had kept on the previous night—or rather in the early dawn of this same morning, for he had not gone to his bed till three o'clock—Gerald Boyne, Viscount Dartford, rose early enough next day to surprise his valet, and prepared to look his latest folly steadily in the face, and see what it had brought him to. There was only one thing to be seen in this connection, and that was ruin; ruin, spelt with a capital R; ruin ugly and naked, complete and irrevocable. He had lost last night not only the last five-pound note of his money, but also the last rag of his credit.

"Good heavens! Was there ever such a fool as I am in all the world before?" he asked himself bitterly as he swallowed his chocolate.

It was all gone—everything! There was nothing left to him; not so much as one more chance, one more hope.

To whom could he turn? His brother? He remembered that last night some one of the men in the card-room—he believed it was Lord Blencathra—had said that he was all right, because he had a rich brother. He smiled half-bitterly, half-amusedly now, as he recalled that remark. He knew there was no chance, not the remotest, of any solid help from this fraternal quarter.

"And, after all, what right should I have to expect him to help me?" he asked himself with even a touch of self-reproach in his voice, because for an instant his younger brother, Humphrey, had appeared to him in the light of a close-fisted and inhuman monster. It was natural enough to his gay, careless, easy-going nature, to see both sides of every question.

"No, no! One must be fair. If Humphrey started without any advantages, and by hard work and straight living has ended up better than I who started with every advantage, then he ought to enjoy the results of his better management of his life, without being worried by me.

I must learn, as everybody else has to learn, that one cannot eat one's cake and have it, too. Poor old Humphrey! He has always seemed to me more like a blind earth-worm than like a man who could feel and love and hate. I suppose I shall have to go to him anyhow for a thousand or two to pay up what's left over of my gambling debts. That will be quite as much as he'll be able to stand, if not a bit more. But, after all, it's not him that matters. It's Ray that matters. If it weren't for her, all this upset wouldn't be half so hard to bear. I expect I shall find that in the long run I can get on quite as well without assets as with them. But to get on without her is another matter entirely."

He had himself dressed quickly, and then walked round to Grosvenor Place and the house that was the home of the woman he loved. Some little way from the door he met the father of that worshipped woman—old Marcus Somerton, the banker—on horseback, starting for his morning ride in the Park. The old man—old in Dartford's estimation, although his actual years numbered only fifty-five—scowled at him and rode on without stopping to say "good morning."

"He has heard of what happened to me last night," Dartford said to himself. "Bad news always travels fast. He would rather I didn't come to his house now. Well, he need not trouble. The chances are a hundred to one that he will not encounter me in this world again after to-day."

Reaching the banker's house, he asked for Miss Somerton. He did not wish to see the girl's mother, having a strong suspicion that that lady would be as much against him as her husband was, and might even try to prevent him from seeing her daughter. Besides, Mrs. Somerton would not be up yet. She was never visible before noon at the earliest. So he walked into the pleasant little morning-room of the fine house, with his heart beating faster in sure confidence that he would see his Ray without a third person being present at the interview. He had feared that she would have started for her morning ride.

The morning-room proved to be empty, and as he wandered about it, waiting for her who for six months past had been secretly the light of his eyes and the very life of his life, he thought what a delightful room it was, in spite of the fact that its outlook was at the back, and not on Grosvenor Place. It was the only really beautiful room in the house, because it was the only one that Ray Somerton had decorated and furnished according to her own sweet will. The rest of the house was overcrowded with furniture, overloaded with things that had only been bought because they were fabulously costly. Every room, in fact, except this one, had something of vulgarity about it; yes, even

Ray Somerton's own little boudoir, of which he had only once been permitted a glimpse. But here was the beauty of simplicity, the charm which association with youth and freshness seems to give even to such unimpressible things as chairs and couches and curtains. And the charm was complete when the door opened and Ray Somerton herself entered.

She came in eagerly and yet slowly, as if she were half-afraid at the words that were going to be spoken between her and this man whose love for her had long since awakened an answering love for him in her own heart. And Dartford, feeling that he was seeing her now for the last time in his life, looked at her with a curiously close and searching look, as if he were trying to photograph her face on his memory. Deep blue eyes, with almost a tinge of violet in them, hair of a colour that was almost copper, and a soft, delicate skin, with a rosy flush in the cheeks and a dimple in the chin; this was what he saw and what he would never forget as long as he lived. He drew a sharp breath as he took her hand.

"You are early this morning, Lord Dartford," she said.

He did not let go her hand.

"Yes, I am early," he admitted. "I have come early because I want to hear you call me 'Gerald' once—just once—before I go away from you for ever."

"Before you go away?" She had not seemed to notice his utterance of his own Christian name. She had been conscious only of what he had said about leaving her.

Dartford nodded.

"Yes, I have to go away. I will tell you the story of it all presently. I want to tell you first that you have been Ray to me—not Miss Somerton, but simply Ray, my sweet and passionately-loved darling Ray—for many months past. I have not told you of it until now, because I have been waiting for the right moment to come, waiting until I could feel that when I spoke to you of my love you would answer me with a confession of yours. But by a cruel mockery I said to myself only yesterday that I would come to-day. And then last night—God forgive me—I by my own doing shattered my dream. Ray, last night I lost my senses and completed my own ruin."

"Lord Dartford!"

"Don't call me that again," Dartford pleaded, his voice shaking. "Let me hear you say 'Gerald' once."

He drew her towards him masterfully, held her close to him and bent his face down near to hers.

"Let me hear you say my name once, just once," he whispered. "It will be the heavenliest joy that my life has ever known."

Ray Somerton's pink cheeks crimsoned, and then became quite pale. And it was after a

moment, and when they were pale, that she lifted her face and, looking upward into his eyes, spoke softly, shyly, half-unwillingly still, that word that he wanted to hear: "Gerald!"

He bent his own face lower until his lips rested on her lips. Then she drew herself a little away and questioned him.

"Tell me what happened last night."

Dartford held her a little in front of him, so that he could look straight and fully into her eyes.

"I gambled again and I lost eleven thousand pounds. It was all that I had in the world; and, even so, my brother will have to pay a thousand or so for me. Heaven only knows if I shall ever be able to repay it to him. My position was bad enough before, thanks to my own folly. Now—also by reason of that folly—it is hopeless. I am absolutely ruined, Ray. I have neither money left, nor credit, nor much honour. The only thing I have left is the title; and that will be more of a drawback to me in my new state of beggary than an advantage."

Ray Somerton stood looking at him silently, blankly.

"And the worst thing of all is that I have lost you, Ray. That is my punishment. It is a punishment that will endure as long as my life lasts. The dream of your love has been the sweetest thing in my life hitherto—ah, you don't know how sweet!—and now it is over. Yes, my dream of happiness is over. It was the first dream I had ever had in my life, Ray. It has passed, through my own weakness—my own madness. And now all that is left to me is to go out to the Western States and turn cowboy, to Canada and turn farmer, or else to drop my title and work with my hands over here. In any case, I must go away from you, Ray. And the going away is a hundred times bitterer now that I know that you love me. God forgive me! If I had told you yesterday what you were to me—what you have been for months past—and had heard you call me Gerald as you have done to-day, I should have been saved. And now it is too late—too late!"

"Gerald, why need it be too late? Is there not my money?"

She had breathed the words rather than spoken them. Dartford's handsome open face flushed hotly.

"Your money, Ray? Do you think I could take it? Do you think that after what I have done—after what I have been—I could take the money of the woman I love to set me right? Do you suppose I could reconcile it with my manhood to take it after the proofs I have given of my own weakness where money is concerned? No! no! I have sunk low in very deed, but not low enough for that. Listen, Ray! I'll tell you the story of the last few



years, and then you'll understand that I am a hopeless man where it is a matter of keeping a tight hold on money. I want you to see the difference between me and my brother. I was the fortunate one of us two at the start. Because I was the elder and had the title, I had all the money, too, as well as the property. I started with two hundred thousand pounds. Just think of it! Two hundred thousand pounds! And to-day I haven't a cent left. It would have broken my father's heart if he had lived to know. He thought so much of the family and of the family position, and was so anxious that it should be kept up. He thought, poor old dad, that in me he'd got just the right son to do the keeping up. But he made a mistake in that. Now, if he'd trusted to Humphrey instead, it would have been better. Instead of gambling the whole fortune away as I have done, Humphrey would have doubled it in these ten years, and would have kept the old place up besides, instead of letting it go to the dogs as I have done."

The girl interrupted him with a quick movement.

"You have not gambled it all away, Lord Dartford—Gerald. You must not make yourself blacker than you are. You have given away at least as much as you have lost over cards. Ah, I know! I know. People have told me how generous you are! You have helped to bring ruin on yourself by saving many another man from it!"

Dartford shook his head. "Never mind these things, Ray. Let me tell you about Humphrey. He was not a favourite of our father's, poor fellow. He did something once which the old man didn't like, and so he was started in life with as miserable a portion as even a younger son ever had. A beggarly five hundred was given him, and no more. Think of the difference! And you know what he has done. You know what he is now. He has made himself one of the three foremost men on the Stock Exchange, and his wealth is estimated at something like a million. While I have been steadily losing ground, he has been steadily gaining it; until now, his side of the scale is up and mine is down, and I shall have to go to him presently and plead to him to pay the surplus of my gambling debts—all that is beyond what my own banking account can meet. So you see I am quite worthless, Ray—at least, in the matter of managing my own financial affairs. Anybody in town will tell you that it's a precious good thing for you to be rid of me. Even if we could have married, I should only have been a millstone round your neck, perhaps even a curse to you. I shall try to find in this thought some consolation for the shattering of my dream. At least, you have been spared the misery of being bound to me.

"And yet, now that I find how hard it is to say good-bye, I could almost wish that we had taken the leap, Ray, while yet we were free to do so," he went on quickly. "We could have done it yesterday, before I had shackled myself with my folly of last night. We could have joined our hands and our lives; ah, think of it, my darling! And, Ray, if we had done so—if you had been married to me, and the beautiful face which I carried always in my heart had been made mine to brighten my fireside for ever—I would have taken care that you should not regret it. You should never have suffered through me, for I would have conquered my miserable failings for your sake. Oh, if I had only known yesterday that you cared for me!"

He turned from her, and walked the length of the room. He was afraid to look at her, because he had caught a glimpse of tears in her eyes.

"But it's no good for us to break our hearts, Ray." His voice had a forced courage in it. "We've got to say good-bye, and we may as well do it bravely. You must try to forget me, although I shall never forget you. I would give my life in this hour never to have come into your life and darkened it."

Ray Somerton moved a step towards him.

"Gerald, must we in very deed say 'good-bye'? Is there no help for it?"

Dartford spoke again without looking at her.

"No, heart's dearest. There's no help for it."

The soft, silky murmur of her dress came nearer. He felt a small, light hand laid upon his sleeve. "But, Gerald, if I am willing to let what happened last night make no difference—if it is just the same to me whether you are rich, or have nothing—what is there to prevent our still being happy?"

He looked at her then, shaking his head.

"Everything, Ray. The whole world stands between us. What would people say, do you think, if, ruined as I am, I married you for the sake of your money? Would they say that that was the act of a man or a cur? Could I have any self-respect left after doing such a thing? Could I honour myself again? Ray, Ray, you must see that I could not. And besides, my darling, it is not possible. Your father looked at me just now, when I met him in the street, as if he regarded it as a crime for me to be anywhere near this house. I am here now for the last time. If I were to try to come to see you again, I should find the door shut in my face. No, no, my darling, it is no use our trying to spare ourselves the great wrench. It must come, and it will be better to get it over soon. Give me one kiss in pity for what I suffer—one kiss, and a sprig of that mimosa in your belt—and then try to forget that I ever came into your sweet life to poison it with my love and with my sins. Yes, God knows, folly becomes sin when the innocent suffer for it.

Don't let your brother become a slave to the cards. He was playing again last night. Oh, kiss me, Ray, and let me go while I have strength!"

With a sudden passionate movement he drew her into his arms, drew her arms about his neck, and bent his face low down to hers. For some minutes they stood like this, and then suddenly he let her go.

"Give me the mimosa," Dartford said, hoarsely.

With trembling fingers Ray Somerton broke off a tiny sprig of the yellow bloom from the large sprig in her belt and gave it to him. He took it, and went out without another word.

CHAPTER III.

THE BARGAIN OF BLOOD.

Dartford had never been fond of places of business; but he found himself compelled to go to one this morning, because, early though the hour still was, he learned on calling at his brother's rooms in the Albany, that Mr. Humphrey Boyne had already gone to his office. And to that office, which was situated in Old Broad Street, the ruined young peer was compelled to follow in his track.

He took a hansom, inwardly assuring himself that his brother would pay the cost of it. The distance from the West End to the City was too long for walking, and a cab fare added to the amount he hoped to borrow would not make much difference. Besides, it was advisable that he should get to his brother's office well before noon, before the full strain of the day's business should have soured Humphrey's temper.

What the exact nature was of the business that was carried on in the Old Broad Street office of Humphrey Boyne and Company, Dartford had never had any clear idea. He had never known anything more about his brother's affairs than that Humphrey was a financier, and a very successful one, and that in spite of the announcement on the office door, there was no company associated with him, unless a very green and raw younger son of an earl, who had lately joined him, could be considered to represent the combination in question. What Humphrey really did, and above all how he managed to make the vast sums of money he certainly did make, were enduring mysteries to the elder brother, who had himself shown such a want of capacity in money matters. He had kept up no intercourse with Humphrey, and had seen him but rarely; for the two had no sympathies in common, and the shrewd, hard-headed younger man could never spare an hour from business to pay a visit that had not business for its object. It was by so much the harder, therefore, for the peer,

whom the other had always stigmatised as idle as well as thriftless, to pay this visit to-day to the Old Broad Street office, and to the brother who, by dint of sitting constantly in that office, had made himself a millionaire. But necessity knows no law, and there is no necessity sharper than the immediate need of money; and so Gerald Boyne, Viscount Dartford, overcame, as best he could, his exceeding great reluctance and, alighting from his cab at the door of the office of Humphrey Boyne and Company, and telling the cabman to wait—also a matter of necessity, since he had not a shilling of ready money in his pocket—he prepared to enter his brother's private room—a matter which to him was tantamount to the bearding of an ogre in his den.

No one looking at Dartford and at Humphrey Boyne as the former entered the room where the latter was sitting hard at work among his papers, would have imagined for an instant that the millionaire-financier was the younger of the two. For, whereas the peer was slender and gracefully-proportioned, the City man had begun to get bloated; and, whereas Gerald Boyne was dark, with a pale, clean-shaven face, and an abundance of neatly-smoothed wavy hair, Humphrey was dingy, mouse-coloured, with a complexion oddly red, considering his sedentary habits and the small amount of open air that he allowed himself. His eyes were small, greenish, and very shrewd, and it was plain that when he stood up he would reveal himself as a short man, in spite of the thick-setness of his figure; whereas his brother was tall. Altogether the younger might quite justifiably have entertained a grudge against Nature for her special unkindness to him. Possibly he did so, and further showed his resentment on account of his physical shortcomings by that lifelong jealousy and hatred of his elder brother, of which that elder had always been conscious. If so, Humphrey's manner now, as Dartford advanced into his private room, sufficiently indicated that that jealousy and that hatred had not in the smallest degree abated since the last occasion on which the two had met.

"Humph! how do you do, Gerald? You don't look quite well. What's the matter now? Of course, I know there's something pretty considerably wrong. You never favour me with a visit else. Well, what is it this time? Be quick, I can't waste more than a few minutes of my time with you to-day."

"It's the same thing as last time, Humphrey," candidly admitted Dartford. "I've been gambling and have lost."

"Ah! I suspected as much," drily returned Humphrey Boyne. "I am not surprised. I never have expected you to do anything but make a fool of yourself till the end. How much have you lost?"

"Everything!" was the unflinching reply. "Everything! I am here now without a shilling in the world."

An angry flush deepened the accustomed red of the financier's unsympathetic face.

"And when you get into this state you come here to me? You have never been near me for six months, and now, when you are on your beam ends, you find your way here. What sort of conduct do you call that? I should be on my beam ends, too, if I were as idle and wasteful as you are, and if I had been half as big a fool as you have always been; and then whom should I have had to go to? It would have been precious little good my going to you to beg, I fancy."

Dartford's face flushed in its turn.

"I have not come here to beg, Humphrey. I have not come here to ask you to set me on my feet again, and fit me out with a new career. I have simply come, in the first place, to inform you that I am ruined, and in the second place to give you the option of supplying me with the sum of eleven hundred pounds as a loan, to be repaid within a given period. To be exact, my gambling losses last night amounted to a little over a thousand pounds more than the sum lying at my bankers can meet; and as it is necessary that a man should pay his gaming debts before he pays anything else, I am looking up the odd sum. I shall have to borrow it from someone or other, and I thought I would give you the first chance of lending it to me; because, after all, whether we are in sympathy or not, you are of my blood and you have the family name and the family honour to consider. If you lend me this sum of money—and it is a small enough sum—it will be better than that any outsider should lend it. It will keep the affair more private. At the same time, if you are not disposed to lend it, I must find some friend who will do so."

"And on what security, pray?" Humphrey Boyne's face was growing of a still deeper and darker red. "What security have you got to offer for any loan? What chance have you of ever repaying any money that may be lent to you, however small the amount? And as for the family name and the family honour—well, I think it is somewhat late for you to talk about either, Gerald. If any man ever was a curse to his family yet, you have been a curse to yours."

The elder brother, looking the younger by fully ten years, straightened his already upright figure.

"I am perfectly well aware of my own weaknesses and follies, Humphrey," he said gently, and yet with a touch of pride in his tone. "But it will not do any good now for you to reproach me with them. God knows I have lost through them more, far more, than even you dream of." His voice shook a little.

"I have had my punishment, Humphrey. You need not be afraid that I shall go unpunished. But a time of crisis is a time for action. Explanations and reproaches can come afterwards. Never mind how I fell into the trap once more last night. I had resolved never to fall into it again; but I was weak, and the devilish fever got hold of me and I yielded. There was something that would have saved me if I had known it; but—but—I did not know it then. God help me, I did not know it."

He drew his hand across his forehead as if something pained him there.

"It is useless for me to say to you that I shall never do it again," he added. "But——"

"Absolutely useless," his brother cut him short contemptuously. "You have said so so many times before that I should be an idiot to believe you now."

Dartford nodded despairingly. "You are right. We had better not talk about that. Let us come to the point. Will you lend me the money I need, or not?"

"Lend it to you?" The financier sneered. "That means, of course, will I give it to you. You might as well use the right word. There's no good in mincing matters now."

"I beg your pardon, Humphrey," the elder brother gently corrected him. "Lending in this case does not mean giving. I intend to repay the money—yes, every farthing of it—to whomsoever I borrow it from. I shall only want a little time."

Humphrey Boyne sneered again.

"You repay it? And how, may I ask, do you propose to do that? What security do you propose to offer? So far as I see, you have none. Your estates are mortgaged up to the hilt, so that the revenue from them is all eaten up in paying the interest on the mortgages. The family plate and jewels are in pawn, and whatever jewellery you yourself possessed must have been sold months ago. There remains nothing but your personal belongings, such as clothes, which, though I've no doubt you bought them at an extravagant price, aren't likely to be worth a tenth part of the sum you now want to get hold of under pretence of borrowing it. How, then, do you imagine you are going to pay the money back? And how are you going to live yourself? Are you thinking of marrying a rich woman? Have you got your eye on Ray Somerton, by any chance?"

Again a flush dyed Dartford's whole face from chin to brow, even to the short locks of dark hair that lay in waves above his brow.

"No," he denied coldly. "I am not thinking of marrying Miss Somerton."

"Ah! You show some common sense there, at least," returned his brother with an unpleasant laugh. "Old Marcus Somerton would

see you hanged before he'd let you have her, and quite right, too. But there might be a chance with some American multi-millionaire's daughter. I expect you are looking out for one, eh? Men of your sort generally have the cheek of the devil himself, and——"

"I shall not insult any rich woman, American or British, by asking her to marry me as I am now," Dartford interrupted him with indignant decision. "I shall not marry at all. It is not by taking any woman's money that I propose to repay the loan I want, and to maintain myself in future. It is by working that I mean to do it. I am going to find work of some sort—I do not care how hard or how humble—and put all my energies into it."

"Work?" Humphrey Boyne pushed back his chair from the table with its orderly array of letters and papers and stared in bitter and scathing contempt at the dignified, aristocratic-looking elder brother, whom for so many years he had secretly hated. "Work? Who do you suppose will give you any work? And what work do you suppose you are fit for—an idle, delicate-handed, thriftless scoundrel like you?"

"Scoundrel?" Dartford took a step forward, his eyes darkening, his attitude showing that if the man who used such a word to him had been any other than his brother, he would have struck him. "Scoundrel? You forget yourself, Humphrey. I may have been a fool, and my folly may have been, as I admit it to have been, very little short of criminal. But I am no scoundrel, as you know well, and no man living but you should have called me one without having been struck in the face for the lie."

"You don't consider yourself a scoundrel?" Humphrey Boyne had drawn his chair up to the table again and was sitting forward, leaning over the table, his small, shrewd greenish eyes looking fiercely at his brother. "You don't consider yourself a blackguard for having ruined your own position and been unworthy of your family and cheated your dead father by throwing away in dissipation the fortune which he had held together for you by pinching and scraping, and which he expected you to hold together and to increase by a brilliant marriage until the old family name should get new lustre and a new value? You don't look upon yourself as a blackguard for all this?"

He stopped for an answer. But no answer came immediately, and he went on without waiting longer:

"Look at the way we two started life, you and I. You were the elder son, the heir to the peerage, and our father's favourite. You started life with the title and the estates and all the money that there was in the family. I started with no money, for a paltry five hundred pounds doesn't count for anything as capital in the world as it is to-day. I was not my father's

favourite, and no extravagant hopes were built up on my future. I was considered a discredit to the family rather than a credit to it, and it was held to be quite right and natural that I should suffer from rather more than the ordinary disadvantages under which younger sons labour. And I, who started like this—with five hundred pounds, and without a blessing—have gone up in the world, while you, starting as Viscount Dartford, and with a very considerable fortune, have gone down. It is I who have shown myself a man of capacity, a worthy son of the Boynes; while you, of whom so much was hoped, have proved yourself a reckless fool. And if you don't call it a scoundrelly thing to bring a great name down into the mud as you have brought yours down, why, all I can tell you is that I do call it so. Work? What sort of work do you think you can do?"

Still Dartford made no reply. He was standing with his back turned to his brother, looking out of the little office window through which nothing could be seen but a blank wall a few feet beyond.

"What sort of work do you think you can do?" repeated the financier, his voice growing more and more hard and contemptuous. "You've got no head for stocks and shares, and great deals, so you're of no use to me. I don't see that you can be of any use to anybody. Business people have no vacancies for an ornamental young peer who has suddenly become penniless by his own fault. They don't want figure-heads. Nowadays, men who are paid to work are expected to work, and if they don't work they are sent off. We are copying American methods, and we don't feed fools or loafers. The fat places for well-born dunderheads are things of the past. Do you think I should have got up to be the man I am now if I hadn't forgotten my good birth and the refinements of my upbringing, and got a grip of my business in good earnest? No, no, my dear Gerald, you need not imagine for a moment that after the life you've led up to the present you'll be able to earn enough money by work to put food into your own body, still less to pay back a loan of eleven hundred pounds."

His brother, once the darling of fortune, wheeled round then, and confronted him.

"This means, of course, Humphrey, that you refuse to lend me the eleven hundred."

"Certainly I refuse," came the cool reply. "And I tell you plainly, Gerald, that I'm amazed at your audacity in coming here to ask me for it."

Dartford was silent again for a few moments. Then he asked, standing with his eyes fixed on the coarse, commonplace face of the younger brother who, so far as looks went, might have been his uncle:

"Then will you tell me, Humphrey, what course you would advise me to take? What

you have already said seems almost to suggest that there is nothing left for me but suicide."

"Suicide?"

An odd change came over the financier's countenance as he echoed the word. The red flush died out from his florid cheeks, which lost even their natural floridness. He sat looking hard at his brother for a full minute. Then he laughed an odd, nervous laugh. Taking up a ruler, he began tapping with it on the table. "Suicide? Would that be very distasteful to you in the circumstances?"

All the passionate bitterness of the scene through which he had lately passed, the scene of his first assurance of the love of Ray Somerton, and of his parting from her in the same hour which had seen his first kiss upon her lips, rushed back upon him, filling his soul with a sickening sense that for him all that made life worth having was over, and that death might as well be the end as anything else.

"No," he replied, fiercely, despairingly. "God knows that it would not."

Humphrey Boyne leaned farther forward over the table.

"Do you mean that?" he asked, in a lowered voice, with a peculiar mysterious significance in his tone.

"Why should I not mean it?" Dartford rejoined impatiently. "You yourself have pointed out to me that there is nothing left for me to live for."

The financier rose suddenly then, revealing his awkward figure in all its ungainliness. He walked to the door of the room with a caution and noiselessness which surprised Dartford. Opening the door with a softness that was still more surprising, he looked out, apparently to convince himself that there was no one in the anteroom listening to the talk that was passing between himself and his brother. Then he reclosed the door, and locked it, and came back to confront Dartford anew.

"An idea has occurred to me, Gerald," he announced. He smiled nervously, seeming to be aware that his voice had struck oddly upon his brother's ear. He moved to the fireplace, took up a position in front of it with his solid back planted against the mantelpiece, and his hands under his coat tails; but he was evidently uneasy there, and a moment later he went back to his accustomed place behind the table. Perhaps he was grateful just now for the barricade which the table made in front of him, while the familiar orderly array of important documents and letters before him had a steadying effect upon his nerves. He spoke again, repeating his last remark.

"An idea has occurred to me. It is a bit queer and startling, and you may take it as a joke if you like. For the matter of that, you can act upon it as if it were a joke, if you like.

You can consider it as a bit of fun that we're having together. The idea is a common-sense one, though it may strike you as a trifle unpleasant. Still, you've asked me to suggest a way out of your present difficulty, and the unpleasant ways may as well be suggested as the easier ones."

"What are you trying to get at?" Dartford asked. He was looking at his brother in astonishment. For Humphrey Boyne was a man who habitually went straight to the point, whatever that point might be. What could be the cause of his hesitation and his agitation now?

The financier moved uncomfortably in his chair—the chair in which he was accustomed to find the very perfection of comfort. He took up the ruler and again and again tapped the table.

"Look here, Gerald!" His voice had sunk very low, and was curiously hoarse. "Let me first state two facts clearly. In the first place, I am an ambitious man, and I have made myself by my own efforts a very rich man. I am a millionaire already, and in another year or two I shall be a double millionaire. I have solved the money-getting problem, and now the one thing that I want is social position and, if possible, a title. You, on the other hand, have got social position and a title, and the only thing you want is money. You will admit that this is right?"

Still mystified, Dartford nodded gravely in the affirmative.

"I did not know that you had social ambitions, Humphrey," he said, with a glimpse of his old bright smile. "Well, what next?"

Humphrey Boyne played more nervously with the ruler.

"The next point is, my dear Gerald, that as you have something that I want, and I have something that you want, we may as well make an exchange. What I propose to do is this——"

He stopped short, glanced nervously toward the door, listened for two or three seconds, and then, appearing to be satisfied, resumed:

"What I propose to do is this: I will give you a sum down of two hundred and fifty thousand pounds for you to enjoy for the space of a year, if at the end of the year—a complete year, date for date, from the day of your receiving the gift—you will commit suicide."

The last sentence fell on the air with a curious strangeness and hollowness, and with a certain startling hoarseness of sound as if some demon, and not a man, had spoken it. The words had been uttered very low, but somehow they seemed to linger in that heavy atmosphere of the London city office more than any words spoken in ordinary loud tones had ever done. Dartford seemed to hear them echoing and echoing.

At first their meaning had not struck him. He had only been conscious that something strange had been said; something strange and vaguely horrible, which, having been once said,



would burn and throb in his brain as long as he should have life. It was only by degrees, as the horrible thing echoed and echoed in his soul, that the true meaning of it dawned fully upon him. Then he stood transfixed, rigid as marble, with all the blood that had lately flooded his face ebbing from it, leaving him of an ashy paleness.

"Good joke, isn't it?" went on the financier with a forced lightness that was ghastly, and with a queer throat-laugh that sounded as if an animal were indulging in hilarity. "Two hundred and fifty thousand pounds down on the nail, to do exactly what you like with—to enjoy yourself up to the hilt with for the space of twelve months from this date—and then a dose of mild poison, or an easy pistol-shot. You can treat it as a joke if you like. Whether you do or not, if you carry it out it will come to the same thing in the end."

Dartford's great silence had not yet departed from him. He could not speak as yet. He simply stood and looked at the man of his own blood, born of one mother with himself, who had found it in him to make such a suggestion. And all the while the despair in him was deepening, was growing more chill, more black, more complete.

Humphrey Boyne did not speak again before he received his answer. He waited for that answer, sitting without moving, and with no sign of animation about him, except in his little greenish eyes, which positively glared forth in the intensity of their expectation.

At last the answer came. Dartford laughed a bitter laugh.

"This is a damnable thing, Humphrey. But I'll agree to it. As you say, it is a joke; a bit ghastly, perhaps, but all the newer and fresher for that. And if, as you say, I can't borrow and can't work, what's the good of life to me? What have I to live for any more? As I said just now, I've had more punishment already for my follies than you know of. I've had a blow to-day that has deadened the soul in me. I needn't tell you what it is. I only speak of it at all to show you that I'm in a state of despair, which makes it easy enough for me to contemplate death in a year's time from now, and, heaven knows, I want money. No man living ever wanted money more than I want it at this moment. Why, I haven't even a few shillings to pay the cab I've got waiting outside in the street here. And two hundred and fifty thousand pounds is a great deal of money. It is more than my old fortune over again. I could do a great deal with that in a year. As for death—well, what does it matter? If I have no money, and could get no work to do, it is as likely as not that I shall die within the year in any case. So I might as well make sure of the money, especially as I owe a few thousands to a poor fellow who can't afford to

lose them, and who will be a different man if he sees a chance of getting them back. Yes, I'll take the money, and accept the death in the end, so that you may be sure of your title. Not that you'll find it will help you much to have the peerage. It has never helped me."

"Then you accept?" Humphrey Boyne gasped out the three words rather than spoke them. "You consent to the deal—two hundred and fifty thousand pounds, and death in a year's time?"

Dartford nodded. "Yes, I accept."

The younger brother's eyes grew suspicious. He took up the ruler again as if it were a weapon.

"Mind you, there must be no shirking at the end," he said, warningly. "There must be no taking the money and then slinking out of the penalty. There must be none of those cad's tricks."

Dartford's face flushed once more.

"I'd better remind you, Humphrey, that because a man gambles he does not necessarily lose every shred of his honour. My honour is a sufficient guarantee to you for my fulfilment of the bargain to the uttermost."

Again the keen eyes of the financier darted a searching look into his.

"It's a difficult matter to put down in writing," he murmured slowly, as if he were thinking aloud.

"There is no need for any written agreement," Dartford said quickly. "Neither of us is likely to forget the terms of the bargain."

"All that is needed is that you should write me a receipt for the two hundred and fifty thousand, and add a little note at the foot of it briefly stating the terms under which the money is paid over to you," the younger brother decided. He pushed his chair back again a few inches so that he could unlock one of the two front drawers of the table. Out of the drawer he drew a cheque book. Laying this cheque book on the table and opening it, he began to write.

"It's all settled, isn't it?" he paused in the middle of his writing to ask. "There'll be no fudging it? No drawing back?"

Dartford moved impatiently.

"I'm afraid you do not know very much of me even yet, Humphrey," he replied quietly. "Go on making out the cheque. I take the money, and I shoot myself in a year's time from to-day."

Humphrey Boyne took up his pen again, and then he looked round with a start, for, after a preliminary tap, the handle of the door was tried. He rose and went to the door.

"What is it?" he asked, without unlocking it.

"Sir Linton Muggeridge to see you, sir. He says his business is urgent."

"Ask him to wait five minutes," was the rejoinder. "I can't see him for five minutes.

Lord Dartford is with me." He returned to his table and finished writing out the cheque. Then he wrote out a form of receipt. The wording of it was as follows :—

"I, Gerald Boyne, Viscount Dartford, hereby acknowledge having received from my brother the sum of two hundred and fifty thousand pounds sterling in accordance with the terms of an agreement between us whereby at the end of one year (twelve calendar months) from the date set down below, I am, in consideration of the receipt of the said sum of two hundred and fifty thousand pounds, to die by my own hand.

"Signed by me at the office of Messrs. Humphrey Boyne and Company, 200, Old Broad Street, London, E.C., on this fifteenth day of January, 1901."

The financier pushed forward the paper.

"Sign!" he said, curtly.

And Dartford signed. Then he took the cheque, went out with it to his waiting hansom, and had himself driven straight to his bank.

"It feels very odd to have so much money again," he said to himself. "And as for the end—"

His lips shut with a grim tightness. After all, death did not look very repulsive to him seen across a distance of twelve calendar months.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WOMAN'S HAND.

Marcus Somerton, the banker, and his society-loving wife, whose dress bill never fell short of a thousand a year, were accustomed to entertain largely at their house in Grosvenor Place. Quite apart from actual dinner parties, for which formal invitations were issued, there were not many evenings when some friend or other did not enjoy their hospitality at dinner. It was rarely, indeed, that the family dined alone; but it did sometimes happen that they did so, and it chanced that one of these infrequent occasions was the evening of the day following that on which Dartford had come to Ray Somerton and had told her of his love for her, only within the same half-hour to bid good-bye to her, as he believed, for ever, at the cost of such a wrench of his own heartstrings as he had never thought any man could suffer and still live.

It was after dinner in the billiard-room, while old Marcus Somerton and his daughter were sitting before a blazing log fire, and Frank Somerton, the subaltern, was solitarily and discontentedly knocking the balls about on the smooth green table, that the banker roused himself from his own thoughts, which seemed of late to be very deep and somewhat sombre, to notice the new sadness on his daughter's face.

"What's been the matter with you yesterday and to-day, Ray? You're not troubling about that fellow Dartford, I hope? I saw him on his way here yesterday morning, soon after I had started on my ride."

"Did Lord Dartford come here yesterday morning?" asked Mrs. Somerton, looking up in some surprise. She had heard nothing of the viscount's visit from her daughter.

Marcus Somerton rose and kicked one of the burning logs into a more satisfactory position.

"Yes, he did. And he actually had the impudence to come after his criminal folly of the night before, when he lost his last shilling—literally, I believe, his last shilling—in Major Vane's card-room. So you hadn't heard of the visit, eh? You'd better ask Ray a few questions about it. He would be quite capable of asking her to marry him, so that her money might serve him to gamble with, now that all his own is gone. Scoundrels like that have a positively staggering audacity."

"Lord Dartford is not a scoundrel, father," Ray Somerton said. "He is weak and easily led; but he is very good-hearted and absolutely honourable. He is the very last man who could be called a scoundrel."

"I should like to know who is a scoundrel, then, if a man who has gone to the dogs himself and done his best to lead others there isn't one?" her father retorted angrily. "And as for this man, Ray, you ought to hate him for having led poor Frank astray."

"Led Frank astray?" echoed the girl in perplexed surprise. Lieutenant Frank Somerton himself happened to be at this moment conveniently at the other side of the large room.

"Certainly he has led Frank astray, by inducing him to play poker for high stakes," insisted her father. "It may be the ruin of your brother's whole career. It would have been better if I had had my own way about his profession and had him come into business with me instead of going into the Service and half ruining me to support him in it."

He looked round in search of his son, but that promising young fellow had found an opportunity to depart. Evidently he had not been out of earshot just now when his name had been brought into the conversation.

"I don't think Lord Dartford has had anything to do with Frank's card playing, father. Indeed, I believe he has tried often to keep him from playing, and especially from playing for high stakes. Frank has only yielded to temptation like the rest of them."

"I don't see why you should defend Dartford as you do, Ray," put in Mrs. Somerton disapprovingly. "I hope you have not grown fond of him. He is a kind of man that does nothing but harm either to himself or to his friends—or indeed to anybody that he comes

into contact with. Now if it were his younger brother, Humphrey Boyne, it would be different. There is a man who is worth calling a man. And when one thinks what a miserable start he had, as compared with Dartford, his success is perfectly amazing. Why, he is one of the three richest men in London!"

"Certainly he is," affirmed Marcus Somerton with the conviction of a man who knows all about the money market and whose opinion is therefore worth giving and worth hearing. "He says he's got a million, but in point of fact he's got nearer three millions. He's going ahead as fast as he can go."

"It's a great pity he hasn't the title," sighed Mrs. Somerton.

"He may get it yet," rejoined her husband comfortingly. "Dartford can't live very long, now that he's penniless and hopeless. Those delicately-bred fellows who've been accustomed to every luxury generally break down in health after they've broken down in pocket. And as for Dartford, I don't even see where he will be able to get bread and cheese from. After the career he's had and the way he finished up the other night, no sane man will lend him so much as a five-pound note. So, if he can be kept from marrying during the next two or three years, Humphrey will have a good chance of coming into the peerage."

Ray Somerton's beautiful face, that had been very pale for the last twenty-four hours or so, flushed deeply.

"There are many men who ought to be only too glad to lend Lord Dartford hundreds—yes, thousands—of pounds as something towards repayment of his generosity to them at different times," she interposed, with a note of passionate indignation in her voice. "You know very well, father, that Lord Dartford has ruined himself quite as much by his generosity as by his gambling losses. As long as he had money, everybody that came to him in trouble was helped."

"The more fool he," grunted old Somerton, contemptuously. "This is not a world in which a man can afford to do that sort of thing."

"I suppose that must be the reason why Dartford has always been so well liked," remarked Mrs. Somerton thoughtfully. "I have often wondered why it is that in spite of his wildness and recklessness nobody, not even the most steady-going people, can ever be brought to say really a word against him. Poor Humphrey Boyne, on the other hand, is most unpopular. No one seems to like him. Considering how steady he is, it is really incomprehensible."

"He has a reputation for being hard and unsympathetic," Ray Somerton said.

"Oh, of course! Because he doesn't fling his money into the lap of every whining beggar that comes to him," snarled the banker,

uncrossing and re-crossing his legs, and then proceeding to search for a cigar. "Every wise man is bound to be unpopular in a world made up principally of fools. I've heard that sort of nonsense talked about Humphrey Boyne myself. But he's a man of wealth now, when his brother's a beggar, and that's enough for me. I can tell by that what he's worth without taking the opinion of idiots. And, anyhow, Ray, if he comes here and asks you to marry him, as I've got an idea that he'll do, you'd better accept him. You'd better understand at once that your mother and I expect you to accept him. This is an age of facts, not of fairy tales; and looked at in the light of facts and common sense, Humphrey Boyne is a man who would suit you very well as a husband and would suit us very well as a son-in-law. As your mother said just now, it is certainly a pity that he hasn't the family title. But I myself think that there's a very good chance of his getting it. So, if you've cherished a fancy that you would like to become Lady Dartford, you may still gratify it through the younger brother."

"It is a pity that Humphrey doesn't look the younger of the two," regretted Mrs. Somerton, who, in spite of a lifetime spent with her husband, had still some leanings towards romance.

"My dear Sophia, whatever does that matter?" remonstrated Marcus Somerton appealingly as he lighted his cigar. "Why, you yourself have said a thousand times that a man's looks are of no account whatever!"

"That is perfectly true," reluctantly admitted the lady, thinking possibly that she could not do otherwise than admit it when her husband sat there in front of her in perpetual testimony to the fact that she herself had not been particular about personal attractiveness when choosing a mate.

Ray Somerton, pale again and looking very troubled, went quietly out of the billiard-room presently in search of her brother. She found him where she had expected to find him, namely, in the smoking-room. He had turned off the electric lights and was sitting there in the firelight only, buried in the depths of an easy chair and also enjoying a cigar.

"Is that you, Ray? The governor was getting on to a delicate topic just now, so I thought I'd better slip away. Did you have to slip out, too, because they were abusing Dartford too much?"

She shook her head, her copper-coloured hair shining in the firelight.

"No, I did not come away for that, although they did say too much against Lord Dartford and it made my heart hot and full. Frank, tell me—did he ever induce you to play, or lead you on to gamble in any way?"

"Never!" answered the young man emphatically. "He's always done the very opposite. He's tried to keep me from it.



Why, he wouldn't have played the night before last and ruined himself if it hadn't been that he took my hand to keep me from playing any more ! I was beginning to lose pretty heavily and he saw it."

"Oh, Frank ! Frank !"

She had sat down in a chair near the one that he occupied, and now she bent her figure in an attitude of sudden and sharp grief, until her beautiful head came low down into the firelight. The young lieutenant started.

"What is it, Ray ?"

"Oh, Frank, you've broken my heart ! You did more harm by playing that night than you dream of. You have made my love hopeless, and my life a misery and a regret. I—I had thought—I had hoped that I was going to be happy ; but you have made it impossible that I can ever be so, because you have made it impossible that the man whom I love and who loves me can ever marry me. Oh, Frank, Frank, if you had not played that night, and so led him to play !"

Her brother stared at her through the firelit darkness. He saw that her small white hands were clenched as if in an effort to conquer anguish.

"Do you mean Dartford, Ray ? Do you *love* him ? And has this come between you for ever ? My God ! And I am the cause of it ! Yes, I am the cause of it. For he had left off playing for weeks, and to a dead certainty he would not have played the other night if I had not been there and he had not wanted to save me."

There was an interval of silence, during which only the girl's sobs were heard ; dry, tearless sobs that shook her whole slender young body. Her brother leaned over her.

"Ray, I'd have given my soul not to have done this. I never meant to do it, as you know. It was one of those cursed accidents that come sometimes to people who have only good intentions to carry them through life. Of course, it's no good saying that Dartford ought to have resisted. When a fellow's got a leaning that way, the only chance for him is to keep from touching the cards at all. And Dartford wouldn't have touched them the other night if it hadn't been for me. Oh, Ray, Ray, what can I do to atone for it ?"

Ray Somerton lifted her head suddenly then, controlling her sobs with an effort.

"There's one thing you can do, Frank. You can give me your promise never to play cards for money again. It would help me a great deal if this good were to come out of my sorrow. Ah, Frank, won't you promise me ? It would make me feel that your future, at least, is safe. Frank—dear Frank !"

Raising herself, she put one arm about his neck.

"Promise me, dear Frank. You know that it is my love for you—a sister's love—that

makes me ask you to do it. I want you to be strong against this gambling fever. I want to feel that, even though I have lost the man I love, I yet have not loved him in vain, have not suffered in vain. Promise me, Frank ! Give me your word that you will not play again for money. Why are you silent ? Why do you not answer me ?"

In the firelight her bright, young eyes searched his face. And she saw clearly enough that it was troubled. "What is it, Frank ? Why do you not say yes ?"

The young lieutenant half averted his face from her.

"I will give you the promise the day after to-morrow, Ray," he answered at last. "I can't give it now."

"Why not ?" she whispered.

He rose up suddenly and moved to the mantelpiece and stood by it.

"Because I have already promised to play one game more," he confessed to her, half sullenly. Something in his tone suggested that he was glad of the absence of any light except that which the flickering flames of the wood fire cast fitfully about the room.

"Don't be angry with me, Ray. I can't help what's already done. I've promised to play poker with the Major and Blencathra to-morrow night, and I must keep my word. But after that I'll never play again."

A quick chill that was like a presentiment of evil ran through Ray Somerton's veins.

"Why need you keep your word to do a foolish thing, Frank ? I will go to Major Vane and Lord Blencathra and ask them to let you off. And then——"

"Nonsense, Ray ; do you think I am a baby ? A fellow in my position can't go on in that silly way. If an officer gives his word to go straight to the devil, he must keep it. But it shall be for the last time ; I'll promise you that. The idea that Dartford's ruin is breaking your heart has fairly knocked me over. I hate the beastly cards now. They shall never victimise me after——"

He stopped, short and sharp, for the room door had opened, and two shadowy, but bulky, figures were entering.

"Hulloa !" exclaimed the voice of the master of the house. "She's here in the dark ! And so is Frank. Whatever have you turned the lights off for ?"

And he fumbled about for the electric button. Finding it after a moment, he turned up the lights and revealed the figure of his daughter in her white silk dinner dress, half buried in the depths of an easy chair, and the other figure, that of his son, standing erect and resolute against the mantelpiece.

"Ray, my dear, here is Mr. Humphrey Boyne. We have been looking for you everywhere. This is the last place we should have

expected to find you in, especially as I thought Frank had gone out. Had you not better come back to the drawing-room now? We have left your mother there alone."

But Mrs. Somerton was not in the drawing-room when the little party of four got back to it. Her husband went in search of her, and Frank excused himself on the plea that he had to go back to his quarters; so Ray Somerton and Humphrey Boyne were left alone together.

The girl sat down on a couch near the fire and looked at the millionaire financier without a smile, and with her pulses quickened a little by inward indignation against him for his hardness, and his pretty widely-known hatred of his brother. How unlike he was to that brother, in his bloated coarseness of body and in the grim harshness of his face, which told a tale of an upward struggle to wealth over the souls and bodies of his weaker fellow mortals. Did he intend to do anything for his brother now? Did he intend to help him so far as to provide him with money for the barest necessities of life until he should be able, by working in some way, to provide them for himself?

He was stroking his chin meditatively, as he stood by the fire looking at her. Presently, he spoke.

"I have come here to-night to ask you if you will marry me, Miss Somerton."

Ray Somerton was frankly taken aback. In spite of the words her father and mother had spoken this evening in the billiard-room as to the possibility of his asking her to marry him, she had not thought it at all likely that he would do so. She liked him so little, indeed, that the idea that he could genuinely care for her had not once occurred to her. She was startled now, therefore, and her face showed it.

"I am a rich man," the financier proceeded quietly. His love-making was like himself, dry and hard. "Without taking your own fortune into consideration at all, I could afford to give you one of the best positions in London society. I may add that your father and mother are perfectly willing that you should accept me."

Even had she not already felt cold towards him, the calculating calmness of his voice and manner would have frozen Ray Somerton's heart. She leaned sideways, resting her elbow, in its white silk sleeve, on the arm of the couch, and answered him, without pausing to consider her father's expressed wishes and recommendations to her.

"I am sorry if you have come to care for me, Mr. Boyne, because I cannot marry you."

"You cannot marry me?" The financier was taken aback in his turn. "But your father told me that he was certain of your consent, and that I might be certain of it also."

The girl's face did not change in its quiet, cold refusal of herself to him.

"I am sorry for that, too, but I cannot help it. My father spoke without knowing my heart. I cannot marry you."

"What is the impediment?" Humphrey Boyne asked, still methodically.

"I do not love you, Mr. Boyne."

"Is that the only difficulty?"

Ray Somerton echoed his words in surprise. "The *only* difficulty? Surely that is impediment enough!"

"It is one that can be easily overcome," he answered her, eyeing her searchingly. "But in my opinion it is not the only one."

To himself he was saying: "She wants a title. She thinks that with her face, and with her money she is worth a title. Well, she shall have it. It is only a matter of waiting a little, and then she shall be Viscountess Dartford."

Aloud, he said: "Very well, Miss Somerton, I will take your refusal now, but I shall come back again and ask you the same question in a year's time."

CHAPTER V.

THE SAVING LIE.

The card-room in Major Vane's house was as animated on the following night as it had been on the night when Lord Dartford had staked and lost the entire remainder of his already shattered fortune. The lights shone as before. The crowd of aristocratic and distinguished looking men was as large as before, and the cards lay on the tables as before, ready to serve as the devil's instruments in working out the damnation of any man who touched them.

The talk ran chiefly on Dartford, and his doings, and especially on the amazing fact that he had found money somewhere, and had already paid up his gambling debts to the last farthing. Where he could have got it from was a point which was eagerly canvassed.

"There's no doubt about his having it," said Lord Blencathra, speaking in a low voice of positive awe, so overwhelmed was he by the mystery of the matter. "But where he can have got it from beats me altogether. One thing is certain, and that is that that close-fisted brother of his didn't give it to him. Humphrey Boyne would see him hanged before he'd give him half-a-crown."

"Then where can the fresh supply have come from?" cried the red-faced major, whose guests all these men were. "What other resources had he?"

"None! absolutely none," declared Blencathra, emphatically. "He told me himself that he hadn't any, and we all know that he hadn't any security of any kind left to borrow on. And now the latest piece of news is that he has redeemed one of the mortgages on his estate. So, you see, he must have got hold of a peck of money. Here's young Somerton coming

in. Perhaps he'll be able to tell us something. Dartford has been very intimate with the Somertons for months. I say, Franky! Where has our friend Dartford got his new stock of money from?"

"I didn't know he had a new stock," was the subaltern's reply. "What are the signs of it?"

"Why, he's paying up right and left. That's a good enough sign, isn't it?"

"Well, it ought to be, anyhow. But I haven't got the faintest notion—Chut! here he is!" And the amazement of the young fellow was profound.

"Well, if anybody on earth had chucked gambling, I should have thought Dartford had!" he muttered, below his breath, with more force than clearness. And then he added to himself: "It strikes me that Ray has been mistaken in him. If he can come back here and play again after what happened the other night, she hasn't lost much in losing him."

He was not the only person present who was amazed at Dartford's appearance on the scene. They were all amazed. As for the major, the master of the house, his rubicund face became temporarily redder than ever, and he gasped.

"I've seen some astonishing things in my time," he confided to Blencathra, "but I never saw anything to beat this. He's actually telling Scruton at this moment that he's going to play a game!"

Dartford's eyes meanwhile, were fixed upon Frank Somerton. Approaching the young fellow, he spoke a few words announcing his intention of playing with him and Blencathra and the major.

"I thought you would never play again," the young lieutenant said to him.

Dartford smiled. "It suits me to play to-night," he replied, a little mysteriously.

The party of which Frank Somerton formed one and Dartford another, sat down to the cards, and to successive whiskies and sodas. And the minutes passed.

Dartford, probably because now he was a desperate man who cared for nothing, began to win as he had never won in the days when money mattered everything to him. Again and again he had marvellous hands, and raked in everything. Lieutenant Somerton, on the contrary, had very poor hands, and was rash enough to keep on backing them. At the end of an hour, he had lost heavily, and as the stakes were being continually raised, he had a prospect of losing more heavily still. Worse than all, his temper was giving way under the tension, assisted by the alcohol which he was largely imbibing. And Dartford, who had drank very little, watched him narrowly and noticed that now and again he fumbled stealthily in his pockets.

Presently he demanded that the stakes should be raised still higher. This demand having been yielded to, he looked at his hand.

"A straight flush!" he cried, excitedly. His young face was red now with drink, and his eyes were becoming bloodshot.

"A straight flush?" echoed the others. "Let's see your hand!"

Young Somerton showed it. He had five cards—the ace, the two, the three, the four and the five of clubs. It was a wonderful hand.

Blencathra rose up with an oath and with an ugly cloud on his face.

"Look here!" he cried, showing his own cards. One of them was the ace of clubs. "How do you account for this, my boy?"

Then followed horrible moments that would never be forgotten by those who sat round this table and waited for the explanation which was not forthcoming. Frank Somerton, though far from sober, was not yet too intoxicated to grasp the full meaning of the situation, and of the expectant silence around him. His face became of a sickly, greenish pallor, and he tried vainly to gasp out something as he stared at the two aces of one suit now lying accusingly side by side on the table in front of him.

"Cheat! Blackguard! Kick him out!" shouted the major, who looked apoplectic.

In an instant the room was in an uproar. And then, above the uproar, above the noise of the moving of chairs and of the shouting of men, there was heard the clear, brave voice of Dartford.

"Don't touch Somerton! It was not he. It was I who cheated."

CHAPTER VI.

THE DARKEST SHADOW.

"Mr. Humphrey Boyne, my lord!"

Dartford's manservant made this announcement one afternoon about a week after his master had saved Frank Somerton's honour by a lie.

The shadow of disgrace which he had brought upon himself that night still lay heavily upon him. The ugly occurrence in the card-room of Major Vane's house had been kept very quiet, and had not, as yet, at least, reached the scandal-loving ears of society in general; but to a man as proud as he, there was agony in the thought that a dozen men believed him to be guilty of the crime—for to him it was nothing less—of cheating at cards.

"Mr. Humphrey Boyne, sir," said his servant a second time, thinking that he had not heard the first announcement, and Dartford, looking up, saw his millionaire brother before him.

"Well, my dear Gerald, you are going ahead at a startling pace," Humphrey began when the servant had departed. "You are proving up to the hilt my belief that you have a demon in you, and that running straight is impossible to



you. So you played poker again the second night after you got your new fortune, and hadn't even self-command enough not to cheat at it? If you go on at this rate much longer, I shall have to change my name for sheer shame at bearing it. It's a nice thing for a splendid old family name to get dragged in the mud as you are dragging ours."

Dartford smiled oddly.

"Never mind, Humphrey; when I am dead, and you have got the peerage, people will forget that your name is Boyne. There is no need to be ashamed of any name on account of the doings of a man who has only a single year left in which to blacken it. Have you come here to see me in order to ask me to be careful what I do?"

The financier shook his unshapely head, while he installed himself in one of his handsome elder brother's most comfortable chairs.

"Not at all," he replied. "I have simply come here to announce to you that Miss Somerton has consented to marry me, and that our wedding is fixed for the twentieth of next month."

Dartford faced round upon him sharply.

"That is a lie," he said in a slow, emphatic voice of absolute conviction. "That is a dastardly lie."

"A lie?" Humphrey Boyne sat bolt upright in the easy chair and stared at his brother in such genuine astonishment and perplexity that Dartford felt a sickly chill of doubt run through him. "A lie? And why, may I ask, does it seem to you so impossible that Ray Somerton should consent to marry me?"

Dartford still met his look serenely.

"Because she does not love you," he answered with unshaken confidence. "Because she does not love you, and because she is not a woman who would give herself to a man whom she did not love."

"Ah! Indeed!" rejoined the financier. He smiled a meaning smile which was hateful to his brother. "But what if she were influenced by sudden and peculiar circumstances? Would she still refuse to marry a man whom she did not happen to love?"

A sudden sharp fear leapt then into Dartford's eyes. There had been something in his brother's tone which suggested that he was speaking the truth. He bent down and gripped Humphrey's shoulder.

"What do you mean?" he asked in a voice tense with anxiety. "Has anything happened to Ray Somerton that forces her to—to forget her best feelings, and sell herself to the first rich man that asks her to marry him?"

"You've hit on the right word there," said Humphrey Boyne, with an unpleasant smile, for which his brother could have struck him. "To put it brutally, Ray Somerton has sold herself to me. I have bought *her*; have bought her just

as truly as if she were an old picture. The kernel of the matter is that old Marcus Somerton is tottering on the brink of financial disaster. Nobody suspected the fact, and nobody must be allowed to suspect it, else the bank will suffer beyond all possibility of rehabilitation. It is an expensive business to save him; but I have undertaken to do it, on condition that his daughter marries me. And, after an attempt at fighting the necessity, my beautiful Ray has seen the uselessness of resistance, and has given way. So you may congratulate me, for she is mine."

Dartford turned away, and, walking to the window, stopped there and stood looking out.

Down below him the streets of London were growing grey and dim in the early dusk of the January afternoon. But he did not notice the dimness. He would hardly have noticed the fact, indeed, if the street immediately below had been filled with fire, for he had received a bitter blow, and his senses had reeled under it; and, look where his eyes might, they could see nothing in these moments but the face of Ray Somerton as it had been when he had said good-bye to her.

In spite of the fact that he had been forbidden the Somertons' house, it had needed a fierce struggle on his part to keep away from her during the week that had passed since he had received from his brother the two hundred and fifty thousand pounds. He had to tell himself repeatedly that it would be not only cruel to her, but even dishonourable on his part, to see her again, after what had passed between them, considering the fact that the money he had was only a hollow mockery, which at the end of a year would have to be paid for with the fearful price of his life. Yet now—now—he could almost have wished that he had forgotten everything except his love for her, and had gone to her and claimed her and taken her for his own.

"Yes, she's mine," he heard his brother repeat from his distant chair. "I've bought her and she's mine. Her fortune's very doubtful, of course. Still, now that I've tided the old man over the difficulty, he may get into a solid financial position again. The chances are that he will. So, apart from Ray Somerton's beauty, which is worth any man's paying for, I may not be a loser by this marriage. The girl herself is not pleased with the transaction at present. She is looking like an image of misery, but I can depend upon myself to bring her to her senses and to make her love me after we are married."

Dartford set his teeth.

"God help me! God help us both! If only I were not fettered by this bond that I have entered into to take my own wretched life in a year's time from now!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE LEAP IN THE DARK.

Dartford was crossing Berkeley Square in the moonlight, making his way at midnight to the house of a certain popular marchioness.

It was the night of the day on which his financier brother had come to him and had told him brutally that he had bought Ray Somerton; that he had bought her as he might have bought some superb old picture, or some wonderful specimen of precious porcelain, and that the price which he had paid for her consent to marry him was the providing of her father with a substantial sum of money to hold him back from threatening bankruptcy.

Some three hours had passed after his brother's departure before he, Dartford, had roused himself from the paralysing numbness which the shock of the news had brought alike upon his mind and his senses, and had asked himself what action, if any, he could take. Was there anything to be done, or must he resign himself to suffer his heart's pain helplessly and in silence?

The latter course would have seemed to him the only one to take if Ray Somerton had been happy or even contented in the prospect of this marriage with his brother, but the knowledge that, far from being happy, she was utterly heartbroken, utterly despairing, had tortured him and made it utterly impossible for him to bear his bitter blow without a word, without a struggle. He had said to himself that Ray Somerton must be waiting and longing to see him in this crisis of her fate, and that her heart must yearn towards him in its pain and revolt, even as his heart was yearning towards her. He had determined to see her and at once; and so it had come about that he was walking now across Berkeley Square in the bright moonlight of a London midnight, making his way to the house of the Marchioness of Orr, who was giving a dance to-night, at which the Somertons were among the guests.

It was a stroke of good fortune for him that Ray Somerton should chance to be here at this dance to-night. For it would have been almost impossible for him to see her at her home now that the door of Mr. and Mrs. Somerton's house had been forbidden to him; and it was with a quickening of his pulses in thanksgiving that he had remembered hearing Frank Somerton mention the fact that he and his people were going to Lady Orr's house to-night. Lady Orr, a delightful woman of fifty, had once made a pet of him, Dartford, and he felt sure to-night that he might count upon her help. He himself had been invited to this dance, but had chosen not to go to it openly lest any whisper of his self-confessed cheating at cards should have got to the ears of some one

of the guests, and his presence there might be a discredit to the charming hostess.

Reaching the house, outside which a crowd of footmen waited about the crimson-carpeted entrance, he went in with the throbbing of his pulses quickening perceptibly. In the hall he drew a card-case from his pocket and a card from the case, and scribbled on it a few sentences, which he told a servant to take to the Marchioness. The sentences told Lady Orr of his presence for a few minutes in her house, and of his wish not to be seen, and begged her to ask Ray Somerton to come to him for a moment alone in the winter garden, where he would wait for her.

He knew his own way about the house, to which he had been an almost constant visitor for years, and he went straight to the small winter garden without accepting the conduct of a servant. He had feared to find a crowd of chattering people even in the lonely corners of this closed-in and glass-roofed shrubbery; but, to his exceeding relief, the place was empty, except for a man and a woman who passed out of it as he entered, and who had, no doubt, been resting and, possibly, flirting after a dance.

He had waited some three minutes when the hostess came to him.

"Ah! You are here. My dear Dartford, why have you come in here like this?" she asked him reproachfully. "Why did you not come openly, and so brighten my little party?"

He looked at her openly. So she had not heard of the little occurrence in Major Vane's house the other night?

"There were reasons why I could not come openly, Lady Orr," he answered her gravely. He wondered what she would say if she knew he was a man living under the shadow of an oath to commit suicide on a certain date. Then he asked her the question nearest his heart:

"Have you told Miss Somerton that I am here? Is she coming?"

"Yes." Lady Orr nodded, looking at him curiously. "She is coming in a moment. I have found someone to talk to Mrs. Somerton and keep her from watching her daughter too closely for the next quarter-of-an-hour. Ah! here is Ray."

Dartford was hardly conscious of her hurried, tactful departure. He only knew that Ray Somerton had indeed come to him; Ray Somerton, very pale, and with a strained, drawn face, and yet a vision of beauty in a dress of white, with silver embroideries.

"Ray!" he cried, hoarsely. "Ray!"

He led her aside into a shadowy corner, and there stood facing her, looking at her as searchingly as that same shadow which screened and protected them would permit, and his look was yearning, appealing, desperately earnest.



IMPORTANT NOTICE.

The Editor begs to draw the particular attention of his readers to two items in this number of the "London Magazine." The first is the **SKILL CONTEST** announced on page 221, which cannot fail to provide an interesting occupation for all who enter the lists, while to a large number it must inevitably be a source of considerable profit. The first prize in this contest, it will be observed, is no less a sum than **£500**—payable in cash, while the consolation prizes aggregate another **£500**.

The other item is the second part of the fascinating and dramatic New Novel, "Was She Worth It?" by the Authors of those famous romances, "Convict 99," "In the Shadow of Guilt," "The Story of a Great Sin," etc., etc.

It should be pointed out that in order to provide space for these additional attractions, the magazine has again been specially enlarged, so that the usual features are in no way encroached upon.



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place of refuge for offenders against the law, but this security, which it may be incidentally mentioned was often abused, was subsequently reserved for debtors only, De Quincey being among the noted persons who sought shelter therein. All sanctuary, however, was finally abolished some twenty years since.

But the one really remarkable period of the history of Holyrood was during the residence of Mary Stuart, the whole time being full of event—gay, pathetic and tragic. Her Majesty, daughter of James V. and Mary of Guise, and great-granddaughter of Henry VII. of England through his daughter Margaret Tudor, was born at Linlithgow, on December 8th, 1542. The infant princess made her appearance into the world when her father was lying upon his deathbed, dying, as history records, of a broken heart, caused by the troublous times, and more particularly by the death of his two sons. Eight days after her birth the little princess succeeded to the throne, and was solemnly crowned on September 9th, 1543. The Earl of Arran, the next heir, was chosen governor.

Henry VIII. of England seems to have early made up his mind to effect an alliance between the two countries by the betrothal of his son Edward, Prince of Wales, to the infant Queen Mary, and won over the Earl of Arran to his side by promising him the kingship of the country beyond the Forth; Arran subsequently held a Convention at Holyrood Abbey ratifying the marriage with England. But the aversion of the Scotch to the English match was unconquerable. France



The famous Memento-mori Watch, presented by Mary Queen of Scots to her attendant, Mary Setoun. Now in the possession of Sir T. Dick-Lauder.



—George Gordon, fourth Earl of Huntly.

also came forward with offers of help to Scotland, and hostilities commenced actively and continued until the death of Henry. Then Edward VI. ascended the Throne of England, and Somerset endeavoured to enforce the marriage treaty between the two

youthful monarchs. This action determining the Scots to place their young Queen out of reach of the English, Her Majesty was conveyed to Brittany by a fleet of French vessels, and St. Germain was the place selected for her residence. When only six years of age she was betrothed to the Dauphin Francis, son of Henry II. and Catherine de Medici.

The education imparted to the Queen was far above the average of the period, her two principal teachers being Buchanan and Ronsard. Mary—when she resided at Holyrood—conversed fluently in four languages, was well versed in literature, and

wrote both poem and prose with graceful ease mingled with strength. It is recorded, in fact, that when she was only thirteen years of age she delivered an admirable Latin speech in a hall of the Louvre! Her Majesty was also a musician of no mean order, performing skillfully upon the harp and

lute, and using with exquisite grace the beautiful voice with which she was gifted. The marriage of the Queen and the Dauphin took place when each of the young couple was about eighteen years of age, and was celebrated at Notre Dame with much pomp and splendour. During the period of the Queen's education Edward VI. of England had died, and Mary had succeeded, but she in turn died during the first year of the Scottish Queen's married life, Elizabeth, of course, being the next monarch. Even at that period bitterness seems to have arisen between the two cousins, the Catholic party in England looking to Mary of Scotland to keep alive their cause. Scotland had agreed that Mary's husband should have the title of King of Scots, but only about sixteen months after the marriage Henry of France died, and the Dauphin, of course, succeeded to the throne of that country. Always delicate, he did not live much more than a year after his accession, and Catherine de Medici



The curious enamelled jewel, presented by Mary Queen of Scots to—













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We then put our patent blocks on the market, and the public does the rest."

"I doubt," said Vanderfeller, "if the United States Government will allow us to use these machines in this country. The matter would be costly, anyway."

"That," replied Van Ericsson, "I have provided for. The British Government, at any rate, is unlikely to object to anything. I propose to construct ten great rafts and anchor them fifteen miles off the west coast of Ireland. On each raft we will erect ten of my Soli-caloriolegometers. These will be sufficient to collect all the sunlight in the British Isles, during early spring at least. By the summer we can increase our plant, if necessary."

"I suppose there is no Trust already concerned with the weather in that old country?"

"No, Mr. Vanderfeller; they have, I believe, no trust whatever in the weather. We can, by the means I have outlined, deal a final blow at our almost extinct rival, create a great market for our sunlight blocks, and have a good surplus stock for sale here in the winter."

"And you fancy," said Morgan Pont, "that all these arrangements can be carried out without the British Government objecting?"

"I am quite certain," the inventor replied, "that we can construct our enormous rafts, tow them across the Atlantic, and anchor them near Ireland without the English Government knowing anything of the matter. No doubt, later on, questions will be asked in the House of Commons, but by that time the business will be quite settled, and the British Government, after a few words of regret, will let the whole thing drop."

The conversation then became more technical, and I will not bother the reader with it; it is enough to say that at the end of about half-an-hour—for great financiers make a mere bagatelle of such little deals—the Sunshine Trust was practically formed, with a capital of some hundred billion dollars.

* * *

A day in the middle of May, 19—. Scene: London. May, the month of green trees and budding flowers, the "merry, merry month," is with us.

There are three inches of snow on the ground, and a bitterly cold east wind is

blowing. People hurry along, clad in the heaviest of overcoats, and with mufflers wrapped round mouth and nose. And so we've been going on the whole month, so far.

Not that it hasn't been warmer sometimes. The thermometer has even been up to forty degrees occasionally; but this has simply changed the falling snow into heavy rain, and the fallen snow into slush.

The provinces are in the same state. A telegram in the morning papers says: "Snow has been falling heavily in Gloucestershire for the past week. The prospect for fruit this season is not a good one." Communication with the north is interrupted, the snow having broken down the telegraph wires, for which the Post Office is "very sorry."

Turning into one of the London parks, we find a County Council band playing. The bandsmen are muffled up in enormous overcoats; half the band plays while the other half blows on its fingers; I mean its own fingers, not the fingers of the first half. The conductor beats time by swinging his arms round his body, in the manner of a 'bus driver restoring his circulation. But the band evidently gives pleasure to the men who are employed in shovelling up the snow in order to give the spring flowers a chance of appearing.

The English people are beginning to object.

"The man in the tube" (a first cousin of the one in the street) remarks, "I don't want to grumble, but this weather seems a little too bad, even for England. One can't expect warm weather every year, but still it is a trifle monotonous to have winter all the time. I am thinking of moving to Spitzbergen."

The reader has guessed that the dear old climate of England is not entirely responsible for the absence of spring. No; the gigantic Trust is at work. Not satisfied with depriving us of tobacco in our cigarettes and substituting a more modern invention, the Americans have commenced operations on our sunlight.

But has no intelligence reached this country of the true state of affairs? Yes; some months before the *Daily Gale* mentioned that "an influential correspondent who has every opportunity of acquiring correct information" had sent them news of the formation of a gigantic combine to attack the English climate. Questions were asked in the House, but Mr. Balfour replied that the Government had no information on the



our colonies, or even our politicians, but our weather should indeed be sacred."

The older and more sober papers pooh-poohed all excitement, and the *Daily Paragraph* informed its readers that "We have been told by Mr. Morgan Pont himself that the new trust proposes to deal simply and solely in shrimps; and that the rafts are there to catch them and to pot them by a new process."

But the people of England were growing anxious, and the truth about the Sunshine Trust was gradually leaking out. Plans for importing sunshine in steel retorts from the Colonies did little to relieve the anxiety, and as the days went by and the weather grew steadily worse, a feeling of despair settled down on the whole community.

* * *

I was walking up and down the front at Brighton. It was the second week in July, but I had my winter clothes on, and walked briskly along the snow-covered sea-wall in order to keep my blood in circulation. Gazing south, I saw a bilious-looking sea rolling its foaming billows 'neath a livid sky, to dash on a strand which no ray of sunshine brightened. On the land side the heavy clouds swept away over the tops of the houses, and not one rift in them gave promise of any attempt on the sun's part to break through the pall.

In the far west one might discern what looked like a broad ribbon of distant light descending from the heavens and vanishing into the sea.

Small groups of people occasionally gathered to discuss this appearance, and it was said to be formed by the sun's rays attracted to Van Ericson's great Soli-calorielegometers off Ireland.

I remember it was exactly midday when a distant rumble was heard, which gradually swelled into a mighty roar. Again it was repeated, evidently arising from the west; again and again the terrifying shocks shook the ground and turned everyone's face white with fear. I counted ten distinct reports.

Then, suddenly, the scene grew brighter. Scarcely believing their eyes, men gazed at the moving clouds. They parted, they burst asunder, and—oh, glorious sight!—the broad disc of the golden sun, that sun we hardly recognised after its long absence, sprang out and once more shone upon us.

"Hurrah, hurrah!" cried a paper-boy who was standing near me, and he boisterously slapped me on the back, a familiarity which I by no means resented, but responded to by wringing his hand warmly. People now poured out of the houses, and soon the Front was packed with dense crowds, who shouted, danced and sang "God Save the King" at the top of their voices; while a man with a cornet, who played "Rule Britannia" horribly out of tune, reaped quite a harvest of coppers.

Evidently something had gone wrong with the Sunshine Trust; its machinations had somehow been defeated. Rumours were going round of a ring of English capitalists who were running a counter-scheme, while others reported that the Government had at last summoned up courage enough to send torpedo boats to blow up the great rafts; but these latter reports were scarcely credited.

Later on telegrams began to arrive, and more light than the sun could give us was thrown on the situation. But it was not till the next morning that the truth was fully known. Even then only that enterprising paper, the *Daily Gale*, professed to be able to give full details of the disaster.

"Our Own Special Correspondent" at Ballyslush, North Ireland, reported as follows:—

"I have just returned from interviewing the only known survivor of the great explosion which occurred yesterday off what was the West Coast of Ireland. He is an American, though of Hibernian descent, his name being O'Flannagan, and he held the position of sub-chief-deputy-inspector on Raft No. 6 of the Soli-calorielegometer Co., U.S. This gentleman arrived in our city at 12.32 p.m. yesterday on top of a mass of rock weighing about twenty tons. He was picked up unconscious, but was soon revived by the administration of a stiff dose of 'real Irish.' Being on the spot, I proceeded, at his own request, to interview him, and give you the story as told by himself:

"I am an American, and was, till yesterday, the sub-chief-deputy-inspector of Raft No. 6 of the Soli-calorielegometer Co. At twelve o'clock midday yesterday I was on duty on the maindeck, my work being to keep an eye on the men employed to filter the sunlight as it passed down our collecting towers, and keep it free from germs, bacilli, etc. My attention was called to some unusual proceeding on the mainland, and directing my binoculars





The first of these is the fact that the object is not a single, unified entity, but rather a collection of many smaller, individual parts. These parts are arranged in a way that suggests a complex, interconnected system. The second is the fact that the object is not static, but rather in a state of constant motion. This motion is not random, but rather follows a specific, predictable pattern. The third is the fact that the object is not isolated, but rather is part of a larger, more complex system. This system is not static, but rather is in a state of constant motion. This motion is not random, but rather follows a specific, predictable pattern. The fourth is the fact that the object is not a simple, one-dimensional entity, but rather a complex, multi-dimensional one. This complexity is not random, but rather follows a specific, predictable pattern. The fifth is the fact that the object is not a simple, one-dimensional entity, but rather a complex, multi-dimensional one. This complexity is not random, but rather follows a specific, predictable pattern.

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS









inhabiting the vast region to the west, which the traders for a century-and-a-half found it unnecessary to visit, but which we know as British Columbia and the Yukon country, in which Klondike is situated.

Without leaving their so-called forts they could receive for a trifle of goods or some paltry trinket the most valuable furs; and Fort Churchill and the shores of the inland sea on the north became the centre of attraction for the many tribes of Crees and Algonquins of the south-east, as well as the numerous Chippewa Indians of the north-west.

Added to the romance of the business was the feeling of superiority which their higher

highest picket sinks beneath the white flood and the corner bastions are almost submerged, and the entrance to the central gate resembles the cutting of a railway tunnel; snow, that billows to the unbroken reaches of the circling sky-line like a white sea. East, frost-mist hides the low horizon in clouds of smoke, for the sun which rises from the east in other climes rises from the south-east here, and until the spring equinox, bringing summer with a flood-tide of thaw, grey darkness hangs in the east like a fog. South, the sun moves across the snowy levels in a wheel of fire, for it has scarcely risen full-sphered above the sky-line before it sinks again, etching drift and tip of half



Map of the Hudson's Bay Company territory in 1685. The crosses indicate various outposts on the corporation's country for protection against the ravages of hostile Indians.

general wisdom, and likewise the knowledge of the value of their goods, gave the white traders over the redskins, who though astute enough in war, were simple as babies in barter. In truth, "Skin for skin" was a good motto in those days.

The colder the climate, the finer the fur. The farther north the fort, the more typical it is of the fur trader's realm.

For six, seven, eight months of the year the fur trader's world is a white wilderness of snow; snow, water-waved by winds that sweep from the pole; snow, drifted into ramparts round the fort stockades till the

buried brush in long, lonely, fading shadows. The West shimmers in warm purplish greys, for the moist Chinook winds come over the mountains, melting the snow. North, is the cold steel of ice by day, and at night, northern lights darting through the polar dark like burnished spears.

Christmas Day is welcomed at the northern fur posts by a firing of cannon from the snow-muffled bastions. Before the stars have faded, chapel services begin. Frequently, on either Christmas or New Year's Day, a grand feast is given the tawny-skinned habitués of the fort, who come shuffling to



Figure 1. Relationship between N and S .

the number of firms that survive, S , is a function of the number of firms, N . The relationship between N and S is shown in Figure 1. The curve starts at the origin and rises steeply, then levels off, approaching the line $S = N$ from below. The curve is labeled S and the line is labeled N .

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she no mor' jump top Montagnais! Well, ma frien'! Montagnais, he roll over, too—leettle bit scare! But, hees nose! Ah—bigosh—de bear she got dat, dat all nose he ever haf no mor'!"

And with a flourish the story-teller takes to himself the credit of Montagnais' heroism.

But in all the feasting, trade has not been forgotten, and as soon as the Indians recover from post-prandial torpor, bartering begins. In one of the warehouses stands a trader. An Indian approaches with a pack of peltries, weighing from eighty to a hundred pounds. Throwing it down, he spreads out the contents. Of otter, and mink, and pekan there will be plenty, for these fish-eaters are easiest taken before mid-winter frost has frozen the streams solid.

In recent years there have been few beaver skins, a closed season of several years giving the little rodents a chance to multiply. By treaty the Indian may hunt all creatures of the chase as long as "the sun rises and the rivers flow," but the fur trader can enforce a closed season by refusing to barter for the pelts. Of musk-rat skins, hundreds of thousands are carried to the forts every season.

The little haystack houses of musk-rats offer the trapper easy prey when frost freezes the sloughs, shutting off retreat below, and heavy snow-fall has not yet hidden the little creature's winter home.

The trading is done in several ways. Among the Esquimaux, whose arithmetical powers seldom exceed a few units, the trader holds up his hand with one, two, three fingers raised, signifying that he offers for the skin before him equivalents in value to one, two, three prime beaver. If satisfied, the Indian passes over the furs and the trader gives flannel, tea, powder, knives, beads, or tobacco to the value indicated by the raised fingers.

But always, beaver skin is the unit of coin. Beavers are the Indian's shillings and pence, his tokens of currency.

South of the arctics, where native intelligence is of higher grade, the beaver values are represented by goose quills, small sticks, bits of shell, or most common of all—discs of lead, tea chests melted down, stamped on one side with the Company's arms, on the other with the figures one, two, one-half, one-quarter, representing so much value in beaver.

First of all, then, furs in the pack must be sorted, silver fox worth five hundred dollars separated from cross fox and blue and white,

worth from ten dollars down, according to quality, and from common red fox worth less. Twenty years ago it was no unusual thing for the Hudson's Bay Company to send to England yearly 10,000 cross fox skins, 7,000 blue, 100,000 red, half-a-dozen silver. Few wolf skins are in the trapper's pack, unless particularly fine specimens of brown arctic and white arctic, bought as a curiosity, and not for value as skins. Against the wolf the trapper wages war as against a pest that destroys other game, and not for its skin. Next to musk-rat, the most plentiful fur will be that of the rabbit or varying hare. Buffalo was once the staple of the hunter. What the buffalo was, the white rabbit is to-day. From it the Indian gets clothing, tepee covers, blankets, thongs, food, and the manufacturer of furs gets grey fox and chinchilla, and seal in imitation. Except one year in seven, when a rabbit plague cuts down their prolific numbers, the varying hare is plentiful enough to sustain the Indian.

Having received so many bits of lead for his furs, the Indian goes to the store counter, where begins interminable bickering. Montagnais' squaw has only fifty "beaver" coin, and her desires are a hundredfold what those will buy. Besides, the copper-skinned lady enjoys beating down prices and driving a bargain so well that she would think the clerk was cheating if he asked a fixed price from the first. Frequently an Indian presents himself without "beaver" enough to buy necessities. What then? I doubt if in all the years of the Company's rule one needy Indian has been turned away. The trader advances what the Indian needs, and chalks up so many "beaver" against his next hunt.

Long ago, when rival traders strove for the furs, whisky played a disgracefully prominent part in all bartering, the intoxicated Indian being an easier victim than the sober, and the Indian mad with thirst for liquor the most easily cajoled of all. But to-day, when there is no competition, whisky plays no part whatever.

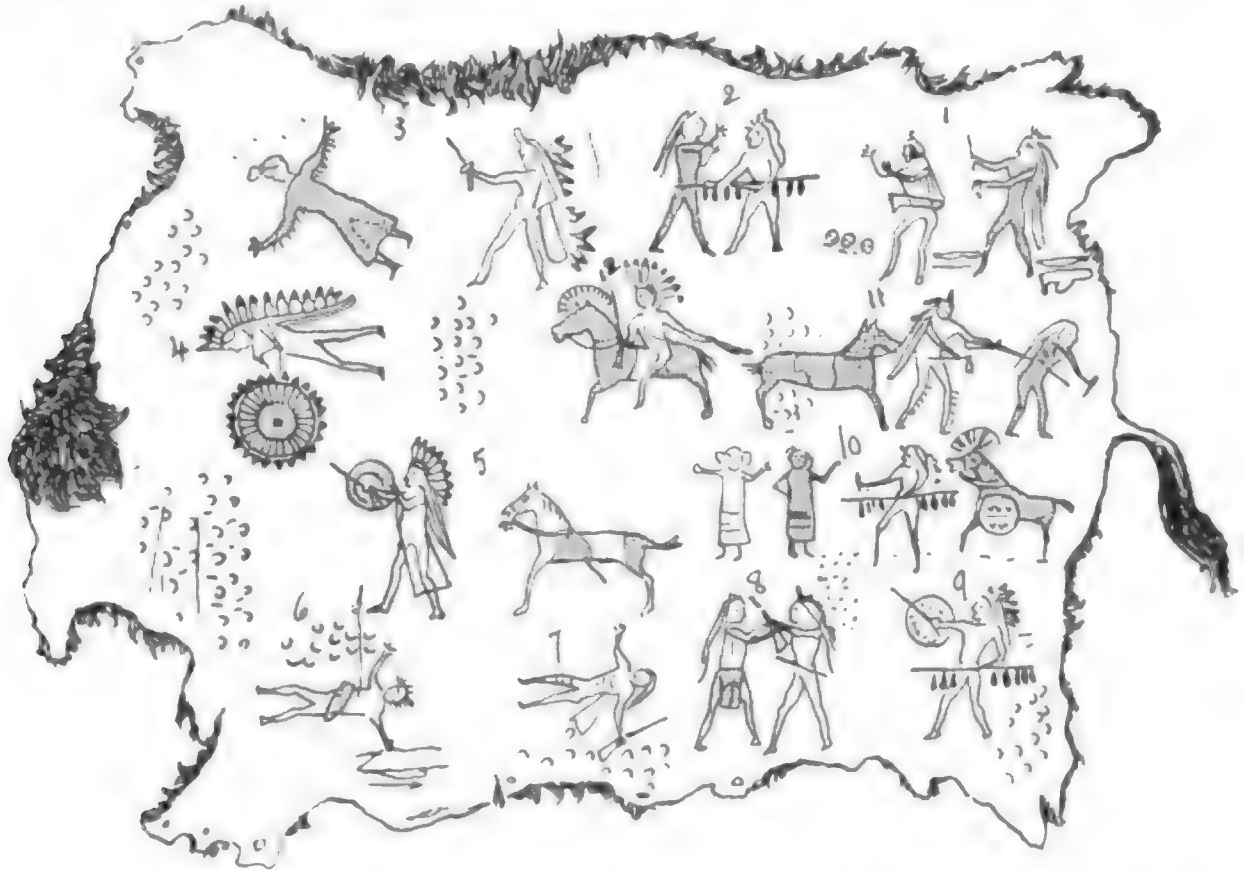
Whisky, indeed, is in the forts, so is pa'n-killer, for which the Indian has as keen an appetite, both for the exigencies of hazardous life in an unsparing climate beyond medical aid: but the first thing Hudson Bay traders did in 1885, when rebel Indians surrounded the Saskatchewan forts, was to split open the casks and spill all alcohol. The second thing was to bury ammunition—showing which they considered the more dangerous.



Ermine is at its best when the cold is most intense, the tawny weasel coat turning from fawn to yellow, from yellow to cream and snow-white, according to the latitude north, and the season. Unless it is the pelt of the baby ermine, soft as swan's down, tail tip jet, the best ermine is not likely to be in a pack brought in by Christmas.

Fox, lynx, mink, marten, otter and bear, the trapper can take with steel traps of a size varying with the game, or even with the

blank on the snow, where the crafty little forager has dived below the light surface and wriggled forward like a snake to dart up with a plunge of fangs into the heart-blood of the unwary snow-bunting. From the length of the leaps the trapper judges the age of the ermine; fourteen inches from nose to tail tip means a full-grown ermine, with hair too coarse to be damaged by a snare. The man suspends the noose of looped twine across the runway from a twig bent down so that



Warlike feats of a Mandan chief portrayed on a buffalo robe.

Begins at upper right hand corner: 1. Mah-to-toh-pa kills a Sioux chief—three heads are three Riccarees whom the Sioux chief had killed—Sioux's face is black with war paint—Mah-to-toh-pa holds scalp in one hand, knife in other, bows and quivers have been thrown down. 2. Mah-to-toh-pa running a Cheyenne chief through the body with a lance, the eagle quills appended signifying victory. 3. A Cheyenne chief falling wounded by the gun held in the Mandan's hand, the thirty foot-tracks representing the number of enemies present at the battle—the mark behind the Mandan's head representing arrows that missed him. 4. A chief with fine buffalo shield defeated by Mah-to-toh-pa. 5. Mandan chief dismounts and rushes upon fleeing enemy, whose tracks are seen. 6. Brother of the Mandan, killed by a Riccaree, who shot him with an arrow and then drove a lance into the body—the Mandan took this lance with the blood dry on the blade and four years afterwards, according to his oath, slew the murderer—the tracks around the dead brother signify a Riccaree. 7. A Riccaree killed by the Mandan for shooting a white trader. 8. The Mandan in single combat with Cheyenne chief. 9. The Mandan, with lance and shield, facing the foe, whose shots are seen in the air before him—tracks behind signify that his tribe has deserted him. 10. The Mandan chief scalping two Ojibway women in revenge for the murder of women of his own tribe. 11. The Mandan shooting the fleeing Assiniboine—his own tribe having fallen back. 12. The Mandan, with an arrow shot through him, refusing to turn back.

clumsily constructed dead-fall, the log suspended above the bait being heavy or light according to the expected intruder, but the ermine, with fur as easily damaged as finest gauze, must be handled differently.

Going the rounds of his traps, the hunter has noted curious tiny tracks like the dots and dashes of a telegraphic code. Here are little prints slurring into one another in a dash; there, a dead stop, where the quick-eared stoat has paused with beady eyes alert for snow-bird or rabbit. Here, again, a clear

the weight of the ermine on the string sends the twig back with a jerk that lifts the ermine off the ground, strangling it instantly.

If the tracks are like the prints of a baby's fingers, close and small, the trapper hopes to capture a pelt fit for a throne cloak, the skin for which Louis of France used to pay from £20 to £30. The full-grown ermines will be worth only some few "beaver." Perfect fur would be marred by the twine snare, so the trapper adopts as cunning a device as does the ermine when it darts up through the snow



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THE GUEST OF HONOUR.

BY THE LATE FRANK NORRIS.

Author of "The Octopus," etc.

The untimely death of Mr. Frank Norris, while still a young man, deprived the literary world of an author who promised to become one of its most brilliant writers. His novel, "The Octopus," created a deep sensation on both sides of the Atlantic. Shortly before his death, however, Mr. Norris completed the following powerful short story, which possesses a peculiar interest in view of the author's own tragic death.

Illustrated by H. H. FLERE.

I.

THE doctor shut and locked his desk drawer upon his memorandum book with his right hand, and extended the left to his friend Manning Verrill, with the remark :

"Well, Manning, how are you?"

"If I were well, Henry," answered Verrill, gravely, "I would not be here."

The doctor leaned back in his deep leather chair, and having carefully adjusted his glasses, tilted back his head and looked at Verrill from beneath them. He waited for him to continue.

"It's my nerves—I *suppose*," began Verrill. "Henry," he declared, suddenly leaning forward, "Henry, I'm scared; that's what's the matter with me—I'm scared!"

"Scared," echoed the doctor. "What nonsense! What of?"

"Scared of death, Henry," broke out Verrill, "scared *blue*!"

"It *is* your nerves," murmured the doctor. "You need travel and a bromide, my boy. There's nothing the matter with you. Why, you're good for another forty years—yes, or even for another fifty years. You're sound as a nut. You, to talk about death!"

"I've seen thirty—twenty-nine, I should say, twenty-nine of my best friends go."

The doctor looked puzzled a moment; then—"Oh! you mean that club of yours," said he.

"Yes," said Verrill. "Great heavens! to think that I should be the last man, after all—well, one of us had to be the last. And that's where the trouble is, Henry. It's been growing on me for the last two years—ever since Curtice died. He was the twenty-sixth. And he died only a month before the annual dinner. Arnold, Brill, Steve—Steve Sharrett, you know, and I—just the four—were left then; and we sat down to that big table alone; and when we came to the toast of 'The Absent Ones—' . . . Well, Henry, we were pretty solemn before we got through. And we knew that the choice of

the last man—who would face those thirty-one empty covers and open the bottle of wine that we all set aside at our first dinner, and drink 'The Absent Ones'—was narrowing down pretty fine. Next year there was only Arnold, Steve, and myself left. Brill—well, you know all about his death. The three of us got through dinner somehow. The year after that we were still three, and even the year after that. Then poor old Steve went down with the *Dreibund* in the Bay of Biscay, and four months afterwards Arnold and I sat down to the table at the annual, alone. I'm not going to forget that evening in a hurry. Why, Henry—oh! never mind. Then——"

"Well," prompted the doctor as his friend paused.

"Arnold died three months ago. And the day of our annual—I mean my—the club's," Verrill changed his position. "The date of the dinner, the annual dinner, is next month, and I'm the only one left."

"And, of course, you'll not go," declared the doctor.

"Oh, yes," said Verrill. "Yes, I will go, of course. But——" He shook his head with a long sigh. "When the Last Man Club was organised," he went on, "in '68, we were all more or less young. It was a great joke. At least, I felt that way about it. I didn't believe that thirty young fellows could persist in anything—of this kind—very long. But no member of the club died for the first five years, and the club met once every year and had its dinner without much idea of—of consequences, and of the inevitable. We met just to be sociable."

"Hold on," interrupted the doctor, "you are speaking now of thirty. A while ago you said thirty-one."

"Yes, I know," assented Verrill. "There were thirty in the club, but we always placed an extra cover—for—for the Guest of Honour."

The doctor made a movement of impatience, then in a moment, "Well," he said, resignedly, "go on."

"That's about the essentials," answered Verrill. "The first death was in '73. And from that year on the vacant places at the table have steadily increased. Little by little the original bravado of the thing dropped out of it all for me; and of late years—well, I have told you how it is. I've seen so many of them die, and die so fast, so regularly—one a year, you might say—that I've kept saying 'Who next, who next, who's to go this year?' . . . And as they went, one by one, and still I was left . . . I tell you, Henry, the suspense was . . . the suspense is . . . You see, I'm the last now, and ever since Curtice died I've felt this thing weighing on me. *By God, Henry, I'm afraid: I'm afraid of death. It's horrible!* It's as though I were on the list of 'condemned,' and were listening to hear my name called every minute."

"Well, so are all of us, if you come to that," observed the doctor.

"Oh, I know, I know," cried Verrill, "it is morbid and all that. But that fact doesn't help *me*. Can you imagine me one month from to-morrow night. Think now. I'm alone, absolutely, and there is the long empty table, with the thirty places set, and the extra place, and those places are where all my old friends used to sit. And at twelve I get up and give first 'The Absent Ones,' and then 'The Guest of the Evening.' I gave those toasts last year, but there were two of us, then, and the year before there were three. But ever since Curtice died and we were narrowed down to four, this thing has been weighing on me—this idea of death, and I've conceived a horror of it—a—a dread. And now I am the last. I had no idea this would ever happen to me; or if it did, that it would be like this. I'm shaken, Henry, shaken. I've not slept for three nights. So I've come to you. You must help me."

"So I will, by advising you. You give up the idiocy. Cut out the dinner this year; yes, and for always."

"You don't understand," replied Verrill, calmly. "It is impossible. I could not keep away. I *must* be there."

"But it's simple lunacy," expostulated the doctor. "Man, you've worked upon your nerves over this fool club and dinner, till I won't be responsible for you if you carry out this notion. Come, promise me you will

take the train for, say, Scotland, to-morrow, and I'll give you stuff that will make you sleep. Oban is heaven at this time of year, and I hear salmon fishing is in full swing. Shall——"

Verrill shook his head.

"You don't understand," he repeated. "You simply don't understand. No, I shall go to the dinner. But of course I'm—I'm nervous—a little. Did I say I was scared? I didn't mean that. Oh, I'm all right; I just want you to prescribe for me, something for the nerves. Henry, death is a terrible thing—to see 'em all struck down, twenty-nine of 'em—splendid boys. Henry, I'm not a coward. There's a difference between cowardice and fear. For hours last night I was trying to work it out. Cowardice—that's just turning tail and running; but I shall go through that annual dinner, and that's ordeal enough, believe me. But fear—it's just death in the abstract that unmans me. *That's* the thing to fear. To think that we all go along living and working and fussing from day to day, when we *know* that this great monster, this horror, is walking up and down the streets, and that sooner or later he'll catch us—that we can't escape. Isn't it the greatest curse in the world? We're so used to it we don't realise the thing. But suppose one could eliminate the monster altogether. *Then* we'd realise how sweet life was, and we'd look back at the old days with horror—just as I do now."

"Oh, but this is rubbish," cried the doctor, "simple drivel, Manning; I'm ashamed of you. I'll prescribe for you; I suppose I've got to. But a good ramble on the Continent would do more good for you than a gallon of drugs. If you won't go abroad, get out of town, if it's only over Sunday. Here's your prescription, and *do* take a week-end trip. Tramp in the woods, get tired, and *don't* go to that dinner!"

"You don't understand," repeated Verrill, as the two stood up. He put the prescription into his pocket-book. "You don't understand. I couldn't keep away. It's a duty, and besides—well, I couldn't make you see. Good-bye. This stuff will make me sleep, eh? And do my nerves good, too, you say. I see. I'll come back to you if it don't work. Good-bye again. *This* door is it? Not through the waiting-room, eh? Yes, I remember. . . . Henry, did you ever—did you ever face death yourself—I mean——"



before we knew it we were wondering if she would last another half-hour. Along in the afternoon there came a sea aboard, and caught me unawares. I lost my hold and felt myself going, going. . . . I was sure for ten seconds that it was the end—and *I saw death then, face to face!*

"And I've never forgotten it. I've only to shut my eyes to see it all, hear it all—the naked spars rocking against the grey-blue of the sky, the wrench and creak of the ship, the threshing of rope ends, the wilderness of pale green water, the sound of rain and scud. . . . No, no, I'll not forget it. And death was a horrid spectre in that glimpse I got of him. I—I don't care to see him again. Well, good-bye once more."

"Good-bye, Manning, and believe me, this is all hypochondria. Go and catch fish. Go and shoot something, and in twenty-four hours you'll believe there's no such thing as death."

The door closed. Verrill was gone.

II.

The banquet hall was on the top floor of one of the oldest buildings in the West End. Along the eastern wall was a row of windows reaching from ceiling to floor, and as the extreme height of the building made it unnecessary to draw the curtains, whoever was at the table could look out and over the entire city in that direction. Thus it was that Manning Verrill, on a certain night some four weeks after his interview with the doctor, sat there at his walnuts and black coffee and, absorbed, abstracted, looked out over the panorama beneath him, where the life of a great nation centred and throbbed.

To the unenlightened the hall would have presented a strange spectacle. Down its centre extended a long table. The chairs were drawn up, the covers laid. But the chairs were empty, the covers untouched; and but for the presence of the one man the hall was empty, deserted.

At the head of the table Verrill, in evening dress, a gardenia in his lapel, his napkin across his lap, an unlighted cigar in his fingers, sat motionless, looking out over the city with unseeing eyes. Of thirty places around the table, none was distinctive, none varied. But at Verrill's right hand the thirty-first place, the place of honour, differed from all the rest. The chair was large, massive. The oak of which it was made was black, while instead of the usual array

of silver and porcelain, one saw but two vessels—an unopened bottle of wine and a large silver cup heavily chased.

From far below in the city's streets eleven o'clock struck. The sounds broke in upon Verrill's reverie and he stirred, glanced about the room, and then, rising, went to the window and stood there looking out.

At his feet beneath lay the city twinkling with lights. Towards the city all was dark, but from the district of theatres and restaurants there arose a glare into the night, ruddy, vibrating, with here and there a ganglia of electric bulbs upon a "fire sign" emphasising itself in a whiter radiance. 'Buses and cabs threaded the streets with little starring eyes of coloured lights, while underneath all this blur of illumination, the people debouching from the theatres filled the pavements with tiny ant-like swarms, minute, bustling.

Verrill raised the window. At once a subdued murmur, prolonged, monotonous—the same murmur as that which disengages itself from forests, from the sea, and from sleeping armies—rose to meet him. It was the mingling of all the night noises into one great note that came simultaneously from all quarters of the horizon, infinitely vast, infinitely deep—a steady diapason strain like the undermost bourdon of a great organ as the wind begins to thrill the pipes.

It was the stir of life, the breathing of the Colossus, the push of the nethermost basic force, old as the world, wide as the world, the murmur of the primeval energy, coeval with the centuries, blood-brother to that spirit which, in the brooding darkness before creation, moved upon the face of the waters.

Across his face, like the passing of a long breath, Verrill felt the abrupt sensation of life, indestructible, persistent.

But, absorbed in other things, Verrill, unmoved, and only dimly comprehending, closed the window and turned back into the room. At his place stood an unopened bottle and a glass as yet dry. He removed the foil from the neck of the bottle, but after looking at his watch, set it down again without drawing the cork. It lacked some fifteen minutes to midnight.

Once again, as he had already done so many times that evening, Verrill wiped the moisture from his forehead. He shut his teeth against the slow, thick labouring of his heart. He was alone. The sense of



"To the absent ones: to you Curtice, Anderson, Brill, to you, Copeland, to you, Stryker, to you, Arnold, to you all, my old comrades, all you old familiar faces who are absent to-night."

He emptied the glass, but immediately filled it again. The last toast was to be drunk, the last of all. Verrill, the glass raised, straightened himself.

But even as he stood there, glass in hand, he shivered slightly. He made note of it for the moment, yet his emotions had so shaken him during all that evening that he could well understand the little shudder that passed over him for a moment.

But he caught himself glancing at the windows. All were shut. The doors of the hall were closed, the lights in the chandeliers were steady. Whence came then this certain sense of coolness that so suddenly had invaded the air? The coolness was not disagreeable, but none the less the temperature of the room had been lowered, at least, so he could fancy. Yet already he was dismissing the matter from his mind. No doubt the weather had changed suddenly.

In the next second, however, another peculiar circumstance forced itself upon his attention. The stillness of the banquet hall, placed as it was at the top of one of the highest buildings in the West End, was no matter of comment to Verrill. He was long since familiar with it. But for all that, even through the closed windows, and through the medium of steel and brick and marble that composed the building, the indefinite murmur of London's streets had always made itself felt in the hall. It was faint, yet it was distinct. That bourdon of life to which he had listened that very evening was not wholly to be shut out, yet now, even in this supreme moment of the occasion, it was impossible for Verrill to ignore the fancy that an unusual stillness had all at once widened about him, like the widening of unseen ripples. There was not a sound, and he told himself that stillness such as this was only the portion of the deaf. No faintest tremor of noise rose from the streets. The vast building itself had suddenly grown as soundless as the unplumbed depth of the sea. But Verrill shook himself. All evening fancies such as these had besieged him; even now they were prolonging the ordeal. Once this last toast drunk and he was released from his duty——. He raised his glass again, and then in a loud, clear voice he said:

"Gentlemen, I give you the toast of the evening." And as he emptied the glass, a quick, light footstep sounded in the corridor outside the door.

Verrill looked up in great annoyance. The corridor led to but one place—the door of the banquet hall, and anyone coming down the corridor at so brisk a pace could have but one intention—that of entering the hall. Verrill frowned at the idea of an intruder. His orders had been of the strictest. That a stranger should thrust himself upon his company at this of all moments was exasperating.

But the footsteps drew nearer, and as Verrill stood frowning at the door at the far end of the hall, it opened.

A gentleman came in, closed the door behind him and faced about. Verrill scrutinised him with an intent eye.

He was faultlessly dressed, and just by his manner of carrying himself in his evening clothes, Verrill knew that here was breeding, distinction. The newcomer was tall and slim. Also he was young; Verrill, although he could not have placed his age with any degree of accuracy, would none the less have disposed of the question by setting him down as a young man. But Verrill further observed that the gentleman was very pale—even his lips lacked colour. However, as he looked closer he discovered that this pallor was hardly the result of any present emotion, but was rather constitutional.

There was a moment's silence as the two looked at each other the length of the hall; then, with a peculiarly pleasant smile, the stranger came forward, drawing off his white glove and extending his hand. He seemed so at home, so perfectly at his ease, and at the same time so much of what Verrill was wont to call a "thoroughbred fellow," that the latter found it impossible to cherish any resentment. He preferred to believe that the stranger had made some readily-explained mistake which would be rectified in their first-spoken words. Thus it was that he was all the more nonplussed when the stranger took him by the hand with the words "This is Mr. Manning Verrill, of course. I am very glad to meet you again, sir. Two such as you and me who have once been so intimate, should never forget each other."

Verrill had it upon his lips to inform the other that he had something the advantage of him; but at the last moment he was



But the stranger smiled calmly.

"I defy augury, and I snap my fingers at the portent. Here is my place, and here I choose to remain."

"As you will," answered Verrill, "but it is a singular choice. It is not conducive to appetite."

"My dear Verrill," answered the other, "I shall not dine, if you will permit me to say so. It is very late and my time is limited. I can stay but a short while at best. I have much to do to-night after I leave you—much good, I hope, much good. For which," he added rather sadly, "I shall receive no thanks, only abuse, only abuse, my dear Verrill." Verrill was only half listening. He was looking at the other's face, and as he looked he wondered; for the brow was of the kind fitted for crowns, and from beneath glowed the glance of a king. The mouth seemed to have been shaped by the utterance of the commands of Empire. The whole face was astonishing, full of majesty, full of power tempered by a great kindness. Verrill could not keep his gaze from those wonderful, calm grey eyes. Who was this extraordinary man met under such strange circumstances, alone and in the night, in the midst of so many dead memories, and surrounded by that inexplicable stillness, that sudden, profound peace. And what was the subtle magnetism that, upon sight, drew him so powerfully to the stranger? Kingly he was, but Verrill seemed to feel that he was more than that. He was—could be—a friend; such a friend as in all their circle of dead companions he had never known. In his company he knew he need never be ashamed of weakness, human, natural, ordained weakness, need not be ashamed because of the certainty of being perfectly and thoroughly understood. Thus it was that when the stranger had spoken the words "—only abuse, only abuse, my dear Verrill," Verrill, starting from his muse, answered quickly: "What, abuse you! in return for good! You astonish me."

"'Abuse' is the mildest treatment I dare expect; it will no doubt be curses. Of all personages, I am the one most cruelly misunderstood. My friends are few, few—oh, so pitifully few." "Of whom may I be one?" exclaimed Verrill. "I hope," said the stranger gravely, "we shall be the best of friends. When we met before, I am afraid, my appearance was too abrupt and—what shall I say—unpleasant to win your

goodwill." Verrill in some embarrassment, framed a lame reply; but the other continued:

"You do not remember; ah, I can easily understand. My manner at that time was against me. It was a whim, but I chose to be most forbidding on that occasion. I am a very Harlequin in my moods; Harlequin, did I say, my dear fellow, I am the Prince of Masqueraders."

"But a Prince in all events," murmured Verrill, half to himself.

"Prince and slave," returned the other; "slave to circumstance."

"Are we not all——" began Verrill, but the stranger continued:

"Slave to circumstance, slave to time, slave to natural laws, none so abject as I in my servility. When the meanest, the lowest, the very weakest, calls I must obey. On the other hand, none so despotic as I, none so absolute. When I summon, the strongest must respond; when I command, the most powerful must obey. My profession, my dear Verrill, is an arduous one."

"Your profession is, I take it," observed Verrill, "that of a physician."

"You may say so," replied the other, "and you may also say an efficient one. But I am always the last to be summoned. I am a last resource; my remedy is a heroic one. But it prevails—inevitably. No pain, my dear Verrill, so sharp that I cannot allay, no anguish so great that I cannot soothe."

"Then, perhaps, you may prescribe for me," said Verrill. "Of late I have been perturbed. I have lived under a certain strain, certain contingencies threaten, which, no doubt unreasonably, I have come to dread. I am shaken, nervous, fearful. My own doctor has been unable to help me. Perhaps you——."

The stranger had already opened the bottle of wine which stood by his plate, and filled the silver cup. He handed it to Verrill.

"Drink," he said.

Verrill hesitated:

"But this wine," he protested. "This cup—pardon me, it was reserved——."

"Drink," repeated the stranger. "Trust me."

He took Verrill's glass in which he had drunk the toasts and which yet contained a little wine. He pressed the silver cup into Verrill's hands.

"Drink," he urged for a third time.

Verrill took the cup, and the stranger raised his glass.

"To our better acquaintance," he said.

But Verrill, at length, at the end of all conjecture, cried out, the cup still in his hand :

"Your toast is most appropriate, sir. A better acquaintance with you, I assure you, would be most pleasing to me. But I must ask your pardon for my stupidity. Where have we met before? Who are you, and what is your name?"

The stranger did not immediately reply, but fixed his grave grey eyes upon Verrill's. For a moment he held his gaze in his own. Then, as the seconds slipped by, the first indefinite sense of suspicion flashed across Verrill's mind, flashed and faded, returned once more, faded again, and left him wondering. Then the stranger said :

"Do you remember—it was long ago. Do you remember the sight of naked spars rocking against a grey, torn sky, a ship wrenching and creaking, wrestling with the wind, a world of pale green surges, the gale singing through the cordage, and then, as the sea swept the decks—ah! you *do* remember."

For Verrill had started suddenly, and with the movement full recognition, complete, unequivocal, gleamed suddenly in his eyes. There was a long silence while he returned the gaze of the other, now no longer a stranger. At length Verrill spoke, drawing a long breath.

"Ah! . . . it is you . . . at last."

"Well!"

Verrill smiled.

"It *is* well; I had imagined it would be so different—when you did come. But as it is—" he extended his hand, "I am very glad to meet you."

"Did I not tell you," said the other, "that of all the world I am the most cruelly misunderstood?"

"But you confessed to the masquerade."

"Oh, blind, blind, not to see behind the foolish mask. Come, we have not yet drunk."

He placed the cup in Verrill's hands, and once again raised the glass.

"To our better acquaintance," he said.

"To our better acquaintance," echoed Verrill. He drained the cup.

"The lees were bitter," he observed.

"But the effect?"

"Yes, it is calming—already, exquisitely so. It is not—as I have imagined for so long—deadening; on the contrary, it is invigorating, revivifying. I feel born again."

The other rose: "Then there is no need," he said, "to stay here any longer. Come, shall we be going?"

"Yes, yes, I am ready," answered Verrill. "Look," he exclaimed, pointing to the windows. "Look—it is morning."

Low in the east, the dawn was rising over the city. A new day was coming; the stars were paling, the night was over.

"That is true," said Verrill's new friend. "Another day is coming. It is time we went out to meet it."

They rose and passed down the length of the banquet hall. He who had called himself the great Physician, the Servant of the Humble, the Master of Kings, the Prince of Masqueraders, held open the door for Verrill to pass. But when the man had gone out, the Prince paused a moment, and looked back upon the deserted banquet hall, lit partly by the steady electrics, partly by the pale light of morning, that now began with ever-increasing radiance to stream through the eastern windows. Then he stretched forth his hand and laid his touch upon a button in the wall. Instantly the lights sank, vanished; for a moment the hall seemed dark.

He went out quietly, shutting the door behind him.

* * *

And the banquet hall remained deserted, lonely, empty, yet it was neither dark nor lifeless. Stronger and stronger grew the flood of light that burned roseate toward the zenith as the sun came up. It penetrated to every corner of the room, and the drops of wine left in the bottom of the glasses flashed like jewels in the radiance. From without, from the city's streets, came the murmur of increasing activity. Through the night it had droned on, like the low-pitched diapason of some vast organ, but now as the sun rose, it swelled in volume. Louder it grew and ever louder. Its sound-waves beat upon the windows of the hall. They invaded the hall itself.

It was the symphony of energy, the vast orchestration of force, the palan of an indestructible life, coeval with the centuries, renascent, ordained, eternal.

THE AMERICAN GIRL.

AS CREATED AND DELINEATED
BY LEADING ARTISTS
OF THE UNITED
STATES.



*Reproduced by courteous permission of the
Proprietors of "Pictorial Comedy."*

Two types of "The American Girl" as delineated by her creator. Mr. Charles Dana Gibson.



An English artist's portrayal of "The American Girl,"
by Penrhyn Stanlaws.

PROBABLY no personality has achieved such wide-world notoriety, or is more familiar to the pictorial world of to-day, than she who is popularly christened "The American Girl." Created by that master of pen drawing, Mr. Charles Dana Gibson, she is now the favourite theme of all the prominent "black-and-white" artists of the United States. We publish in these pages a selection of these characterisations. Each typifies in its own charming manner the American woman in some ramification of sport, season or mood. First and foremost among these delineators stands Mr. Charles Dana Gibson, "The Father of the American Girl." The versatility of this artist is remarkable, since no two of his sketches are alike, and,









It was clear from this that there was something in the affair after all, and a few of the directors undertook the next night's watch, the detectives remaining in an adjacent room. Towards midnight one of the directors, partly in jest, called out: "You ghost, you secret visitor, come out! There is no one here but two gentlemen and myself. If you are afraid, I give you my word of honour as a gentleman that the police are not here. Come out, I say!"

To the astonishment of the speaker, who was a certain Major, a muffled voice was heard replying: "If you have kept your word I will keep mine. Put out your light, for I've got one, and then I'll come." This proposal was not altogether relished, but the directors extinguished their lamp and awaited events.

Presently a low scraping noise was heard, and then a voice—evidently in the room—asked: "Are you three quite alone?" The Major promptly struck a match, but before anything could be seen a loud crash occurred, followed by the sound of muffled laughter. The room was empty and undisturbed!

After a short interval, during which nothing was seen or heard of the midnight visitor, the Major again challenged him to appear, and the muffled voice replied: "How can I trust you now?" The watchers were by this time thoroughly alarmed, and after a short parley they promised to make no attempt to strike a light again. Then came a repetition of the low, scraping sound, followed by a heavy fall, and a moment later a man stood before them with a dark lantern.

Explanations then followed. The intruder proved to be one of a number of men who used at low tide to enter the sewers in search of any articles of value that might have been washed into them. In the course of his wanderings he had found a disused drain leading up to some building. At the top it was closed with a heavy stone, which, with some difficulty, he contrived to raise, and then found himself in a large room full of gold and notes, which he concluded to be the treasury of the Bank of England.

Concealed in his drain, he could hear all that went on, and so was able without difficulty to circumvent the detectives, and remove the securities which were afterwards returned to the directors. The man had

stolen nothing and exhibited no desire whatever to make money out of his strange discovery. The directors of the Bank, of course, rewarded him handsomely, and we need hardly add that no communication now exists between the bullion room and the sewers!

Strong as is the position of the Bank of England—the stability of which is practically guaranteed by the Government—it has had its anxious hours more than once, and has been seriously inconvenienced by panics among the holders of its notes. For example, in 1745, the advance of the Highlanders, under the Pretender, as far as Derby, led to a run on the Bank. The streets in the neighbourhood were thronged with an angry and excited crowd, and rumours that the Bank had stopped payment went flying all over London.

The Bank was sound enough, but when it was realised that the stock of gold in the vaults might prove insufficient to meet all claims—for no one would accept paper money—the situation was seen to be disquieting, if not actually alarming. The directors proved themselves equal to the emergency. They gave orders that all claims were to be paid in shillings and sixpences, and the ruse worked admirably. So great was the delay caused by counting out large sums in small silver, and so impracticable was it for the panic-stricken investors to carry off their weighty sacks of shillings, that the business of paying out was effectually impeded.

The danger was further averted by the arrival of the news of the retreat of the Highlanders, and by the action of the leading London merchants, who met and published a resolution declaring their belief in the solvency and future of the Bank, and asserting their willingness to receive its bills from any person in payment of any sum that might be due to them, and also pledging themselves to use their utmost endeavours to make all their payments in the same medium.

Many good stories—mainly apocryphal, it is to be feared—are told about runs upon country banks, and the shifts that the managers have been put to in order to meet them. In one case, a quantity of sacks and boxes were hurriedly filled with gravel, and labelled "Gold," "Silver," "Bullion," and the like. They were then cautiously smuggled to the outskirts of the town and brought





infirm old man tottering along in a black cloak buttoned closely around his chin. Frequently he wore a patch over his left eye, from which habit his nickname was derived. These were but a few of his many disguises. He kept up three distinct establishments, having a different appearance, a different name, and a different wife at each !

He always seemed to be a man of distinction, and went about making purchases with his forged notes, for which he invariably required change. At last he was captured, and was then discovered to be an old convict; but he contrived to send a parting note to one of his wives, telling her to destroy everything, and in this way the evidence against him as a forger was not altogether conclusive. But it was sufficient to convict, and Price saved the executioner trouble by hanging himself in his cell.

The most serious bank fraud of recent days was that of the Bidwell gang, a band of American forgers, who in the long run made the Bank of England suffer to the tune of more than £100,000.

Leaving America in 1871, they secured large sums of money from Continental banks by means of forged letters of credit, and then after a visit to South America—they came to London. Here Bidwell opened a genuine account at the Burlington Gardens branch of the Bank of England, while his confederates went about the country buying up genuine bills that could be manipulated.

When his plans had matured, Bidwell paid in a *bonâ fide* bill of Rothschild's for £4,500, which was duly discounted, and explained that his transactions would be large, as he was starting the manufacture of Pullman cars in Birmingham. Then followed a stream of forged acceptances, to the total amount of £102,217, all of which were discounted without suspicion.

In the meantime Bidwell, who went by the name of Warren, paid the amounts to himself under another name at the Continental Bank. The money thus paid in was promptly drawn out in notes, which were then changed into gold, which was next exchanged for other notes, in order to prevent its being traced. The gang intended to quit the country with their booty before the bills matured, and would doubtless have succeeded in doing so, but for one of those little acts of carelessness that so often dog the steps of the cleverest criminals and lead to their downfall.

Two of the forged acceptances purported to have been drawn by Messrs. Rothschild, but the date had been omitted. The bank therefore returned them to the drawer for this to be added, when they were, of course, promptly repudiated. The police were sent for and one of the gang speedily arrested. His disclosures led to the capture of the rest, and the whole of them were sentenced to penal servitude for life.

In days gone by, when country bankers had to convey their supply of cash to and from London by coach, many an adventure with thieves took place. One banker, who had among his luggage a brown paper parcel containing a large amount in notes, had just placed his baggage in a hackney coach, and was about to step in, when he was accosted by a gentlemanly stranger, who made many enquiries about a sick man in the town to which the banker belonged.

In the meantime the coachman had been holding the door, but when the banker entered the vehicle he found to his dismay that the parcel of notes had vanished. While he was talking to the stranger another gentlemanly person had quietly opened the door on the opposite side and abstracted the notes.

Early in the last century a Liverpool banker was in the habit of collecting old £1 and £2 notes that had become too dirty and torn to circulate, buying them up at a discount for cash. He usually collected about a thousand pounds' worth per week, and every fortnight sent them up to London.

To avoid attracting the notice of thieves, he never sent direct to his agents, but directed the box to a chemist in Plough Court, Lombard Street; and, as a further precaution, the box was always labelled "Spanish Juice." The London banker, being duly advised of the arrival of the remittance, used to send one or two of his clerks to call for the box.

One Monday morning the box duly arrived and was conveyed to the bank, but when opened it was found to contain nothing but shavings! On enquiry it was discovered that the box had lain from Saturday till Monday in a parcels office, guarded by a watchman, during whose temporary absence the substitution had evidently been effected. Unfortunately for the banker, his loss became known, a run upon his bank followed, and he was compelled to suspend payment.



A few years later, a man, sentenced to transportation for housebreaking, confessed that the gang to which he belonged had stolen the notes. One of them, whose special work was to watch Lombard Street, had several times noticed the box being fetched from the chemist's, and had formed his own conclusions about the "Spanish Juice" that it contained. It was then an easy business to arrange for its interception.

Naturally enough, banks have always possessed great attractions for burglars, and the successful bank robber is very justly regarded as at the head of his profession. The precautions taken are so elaborate and perfect, the strong rooms and safes so strongly constructed and well guarded, that the man whose skill and cunning can overcome the difficulties and prove himself more than a match for the combined ingenuity and forethought of bank officials, safe builders and police, deserves to be called a genius in his own line of business.

One of the first examples in England of successful bank burglary took place at Roger's Bank, in Clements Lane, London, in 1844. The premises were entered and the safe was unlocked without any apparent violence, notes, bills and cash to the value of over £40,000 being abstracted. There was not the slightest clue to the thieves and nothing was ever discovered about them, although the cleverest detectives were employed, and a reward of £3,000 offered for their apprehension.

The strangest part of the business was that the notes were never cashed, but were returned anonymously through the Parcels' Delivery Company to the Bank about three years afterwards. They were still done up in the bundles in which they had been deposited in the safe. A somewhat similar case of the return of bundles of notes in connection with a comparatively recent bank robbery will occur to the reader's memory.

Another mysterious robbery took place at the North of England Bank at Berwick-on-Tweed in 1846, when notes and gold to the value of £3,000 were taken. The extraordinary feature of the case was that the bank had been closed with the usual precautions, and the safe—besides being locked—was secured by a massive bolt which ran up through three floors of the house and terminated in a bedroom. It was considered impossible to raise this bolt, or open the safe door, without disturbing the whole house,

yet nothing whatever was heard on the night of the robbery.

At five o'clock in the morning an alarm was given by an early passer, who rang the bell and informed the inmates that the bank door was standing wide open, and the cash box lying open in the yard. On going to the strong room the safe was found standing open, though the locks had not been broken, and no one had heard the bolt raised. In this case, too, the mystery was never cleared up, although much of the missing money was subsequently found hidden away in various places.

Another type of bank robber is the man who works by daylight, and depends upon pure "cheek" and luck to carry him through. A few years back, a clerk from Coutts' was at the Bank of England with an order for £3,000 in gold. The cashier had handed him two bags of a thousand each, and was giving him a third, when the clerk's attention was diverted for a moment, and in that moment one of the bags disappeared. There were a number of customers at the counters, and the usual detectives were on the spot, but the thief got clean off without being seen, and no clue to him was ever found. No doubt every detail of the *coup* had been most carefully planned in advance.

A somewhat similar robbery took place at the Birkbeck Bank. A clerk from Barnet's Bank called, as usual, with cheques for presentation, receiving notes in exchange. He transacted his business and had just placed the money in his leather case, which was secured to him by a long chain, when someone tapped him on the shoulder and told him he had dropped a paper. He stooped to pick it up, holding the case in his hand, and at that moment the notes were abstracted. He immediately perceived his loss and rushed to the door, but the thief had vanished. In this case a reward of £1,000 was offered, but without result.

The bank thief is ever quick to seize an opportunity. Early in 1893, a bank porter carried out a bag of seven hundred sovereigns for a customer, who had a cab at the door, when a grateful gentleman—whom the porter naturally supposed to be the customer—thanked him effusively, entered the cab and drove rapidly away. Then the lawful owner of the cash emerged from the bank—and scenes followed!











out a number of sentences, which Piggott wrote down. Then came the last sentence, in which the word "hesitancy" occurred. "Give me that paper," observed Russell coolly, after the witness had finished writing. The word was spelt with two "c's." Now he had got what he wanted; and for the rest of the day the witness was at his mercy. After the court rose Piggott made a confession of his forgery to Mr. Labouchere.

Opposed to Lord Alverstone in many a celebrated action has been Sir Edward Clarke, who stands, still, at the head of famous counsel in England. His life-story reads like a romance. Starting life as a poor errand-boy in a chemist's shop, he became a reporter and then a law-student, and then began his career at the bar with the little money he had saved. At first briefs came in slowly, but in time he had his opportunity. It came in what was known as the Penge murder trial. Clarke was bricked for the defence. For a comparatively young man his speech to the jury on that occasion was a masterpiece which established his reputation at once. He was conscious that it was the turning point in his career, for the strain on his nervous energy was so great that he broke down the moment he resumed his seat. For nearly a generation there has been no *casse ardele* in which Sir Edward Clarke has not figured. Alone among living lawyers he can claim to have cross-examined



Rufus Isaacs, K.C.

He ran away from home, and his maiden speech was at a cadaver, when he acted as spokesman for the crew in complaining to the captain about the paucity of food on board.

so august a personage as King Edward the Seventh. His Majesty—then Prince of Wales—was a witness in the famous Gordon-Cumming trial, and Sir Edward Clarke, who was for the defendant, had to subject the royal witness to a brief cross-examination. He shares the Lord Chief Justice's fondness for a comic song, and can "oblige" when the occasion requires.

Mr. Rufus Isaacs's rapid advancement at the bar is even more romantic than Sir Edward Clarke's. Although but a young man—just in his forties, though he looks only thirty-five—he is in almost as great a demand as Sir Edward. He comes of a city stock, and is the nephew of a former Lord Mayor. He was for some time a member of the Stock Exchange, where he acquired a knowledge of city affairs, which proved of invaluable help to him after he had been called to the bar. In 1884, he entered at the Middle Temple, and was called in 1887. No stuff gownsmen (as an ordinary barrister is called) is allowed to apply for "silk"—or to be appointed King's Counsel—until he has practised ten years; and Mr. Rufus Isaacs is one of the few instances on record where a man has stepped from the subordinate to the higher grade of the profession within the minimum period, for he took "silk" in 1898. For two years he waited in vain for briefs; but he became engaged in a commercial case, where he had an early opportunity of displaying his intimate



C. F. Gill, K.C.

For many years junior counsel in the criminal courts, now out of the leading lawyers of the day.

knowledge of city methods. From that time he has not once looked back. His three great qualities as an advocate are his extraordinary powers of concentration, his perfect temper, and his subtlety in getting at the truth. He owes much of his success at the bar to his thorough knowledge of the world—for he was an adventurous boy, who ran away from home and has travelled far, and was educated on the Continent. The story of his maiden speech is very amusing. On one of the occasions when he ran away from home, he shipped as a cabin-boy in a ship bound from London to Cardiff. During the voyage some of the hands grumbled at the paucity of the food served out to them, and the adventurous cabin-boy joined them in their protest. Finally, they decided to approach the captain in a body on the matter. When they came before the skipper, however, their eloquence seemed to evaporate; and it was left to the talkative cabin-boy to lay their grievance before the captain. That was the maiden speech of the famous K.C.

Another barrister who has made considerable headway at the bar in recent years is Mr. C. F. Gill, K.C. For many years he enjoyed a considerable practice as a junior in the criminal courts, where his love of details and his powers of analysis and his per-suasive manner of dealing with juries brought him into favour. He, too, exercises wonderful control over his temper; though there are times when he does not hesitate to stand up to any judge who may attempt to

browbeat him. When Lord Russell of Killowen was Lord Chief Justice, the two came into terrific collision at the Old Bailey. Lord Russell's somewhat imperious temper, which as a rule awed every barrister practising before him into silence, stung Mr. Gill into a quick retort, which led to what is now spoken of as a famous scene. The young

counsel's kind manner and geniality, however, accounts for his great popularity with the legal profession.

Like Mr. Rufus Isaacs, Mr. Lawson Walton, K.C., M.P., has leapt to the front in comparatively recent years. Originally a Leeds solicitor, he joined the higher branch of the legal profession, and established a local practice in the north in a short space of time. He is probably the most polished speaker at the bar, and is univalued in the art of expounding a difficult and intricate case.

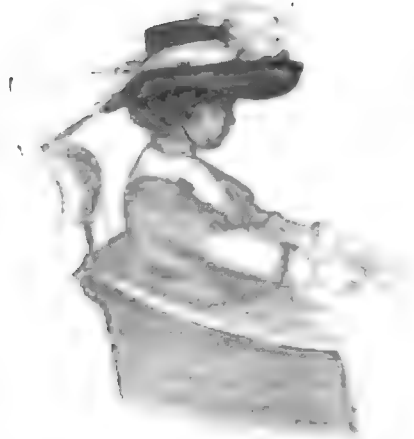
For a time after he took "silk" he was known only in the populous towns comprised within the Northern Circuit, but gradually his fame spread downwards, and he is now one of the first half-dozen leaders of the bar in London. Ranking almost next to him now are Mr. Duke, K.C., M.P., and Mr. Eldon Bankes, K.C. The former is a protégé of Sir Edward Clarke, whom he resembles in his humble parentage. Like Sir Edward, Mr. Duke graduated in the Press Gallery of the House of Commons, where he still counts many friends. Mr. Eldon Bankes, who is a descendant of the famous Lord Eldon, is another counsel who owes his prominence at the bar to his resourcefulness, his perfect temper, and his persuasive manner in court.



Horace Edmund Arvory, K.C.

Senior Counsel to Treasury at the Central Criminal Court.





LOVE IN DARKNESS.

A PRETTY SHORT STORY.

By CLARA GAILLARD BYRNES.

Illustrated by JAY HAMBIDGE.

TO use Oxenford's expression, Mary was "choice." She had always loved what was serene and pure and dainty since the days when she wore socks and a big frilled hat, and accompanied "Honest John" Petrie in his daily spin over Macomb's Dam. Honest John was not above stopping at various wayside inns for various whiskies, and he loudly boasted that he could leave the child outside to hold the lines. She was not afraid!

Oxenford's first glimpse of her was in front of one of these cottages. There was little of her visible except her gorgeous hat, and the two small, steady hands that guided Honest John's quivering trotters round and round the grassy circle. It was a winter afternoon and the horses refused to stand.

"That's John Petrie's daughter," said Colonel Frayne, who was with Oxenford, and Oxenford looked curiously at the child. Her little nose was blue, and her eyes watering in the cold wind, but she had taken three wraps of the lines round her hands, and waited, faithful and patient, with her eyes fixed on the horses. She had always been that way, and Oxenford paid her his highest compliment when he likened her to his first love, Straightaway, whose little steel racing-shoe was hung up in the place of honour in their great racing stable. Straightaway had been like that, so little, so game, so fearless, and so exquisite.

Honest John often drove out to see Oxenford's father, to whom he was well known as a recklessly successful plunger on the turf. Sometimes he brought Mary. She was six, and young Oxenford nearly twenty, but she suited him exactly, even then. He used to carry her out to see the colts. She never clung, nor gabbled, nor seemed conscious of

her ultra-gorgeous clothes. Just as she kept sweet in spite of the elaborate finery with which Honest John overloaded her, so she kept her odd little personality aloof from the coarseness and fever of the sporting world into which Honest John had dragged her.

When she was sixteen, Honest John crippled himself by injudicious plunging, and want of money relieved Mary of the incubus of his choice in dress. She took to the clean-cut styles that her soul loved, and Oxenford was smitten with painful delight in this new aspect of her.

"You've hit it this time, Mary," he said, after serious consideration of her appearance. "Those clothes are all right. You look like a little swell in 'em."

Mary was very fond of Oxenford, and, pleased with his unreserved approbation, she hastened to confide a great project to him. Dad was down on his luck, and she was afraid he was a steady loser. She loved to study things, and she wanted to be able to do something for herself, something nice. She wanted to go to the village school. She wanted to be a teacher.

Oxenford looked soberly at her. He had very different ideas for her, but they had to stand for a little.

"What do you want me to do?" he asked.

Mary wanted him to put in a word with her father. Honest John laughed at her. That his little girl should meditate such flights was absurd, something to be denied, with roars of Homeric laughter.

"Give him a tip—on the quiet," said Mary, falling into the vernacular in her earnestness. "Tell him you are on the inside, and you know I'm stuck on it, and I won't give it up."

Oxenford put it that way to Honest John, and Mary went to the village school.

Mary found it easy going. Oxenford watched her progress with mingled pain and pride. He noticed that she ran with the nicest girls in the school. He liked that. He and his father, to whose great racing-stable Oxenford had succeeded, had always run with men like Colonel Frayne, and Tom Travis and Philip Hunter, and the rest, who loved the Oxenfords for men's men, and thoroughbreds at heart, in spite of their breezy grammar.

He was deeply relieved to find that Mary remained friendly and sweet in spite of the magnitude of her interests. She studied in the basement dining-room, where there was a drop-light, and Oxenford stayed in occasionally. Honest John regarded Mary's piles of books and dictionaries as a huge joke, but Oxenford took it all seriously, and reserved questions of erudition against the times he stepped in to see Honest John. Since Mary had explained that the names of Colonel Frayne's horses all meant something, Oxenford had been deeply interested in Greek mythology, and had blue-pencilled names that looked classic on his racing programme.

One night he found Mary preparing for an examination. He was aghast to see her hot little head bound with a wet towel, a shade over her eyes, and a cup of tea at her elbow. She greeted him cheerfully enough, but Oxenford sat down and stared at her with serious concern.

"Oh, I'm all right, Oxie," said she, laughing. "I'm as fit as possible."

"What's all this?" asked Oxenford, indicating the various stimuli to study. Mary explained. She also explained to him the beautiful theories of the Faculty as to exams. Oxenford saw.

"This Faculty thing is bull-headed, like the judges," he said. "You run your own way, Mary. By the way," he produced a blue-pencilled card. "What's Penelope? Who was he?"

Mary leaned both elbows on her book, and plunged into the romantic history of Penelope, her big eyes shining tragically under her wet towel. Oxenford was a good listener.

"Ripping for Pen!" he ejaculated, when the tale ended. "That was a grand-stand

finish." And he ruminated for a short time. "I say, Mary, give me a good name for my new colt. One that'll puzzle the starter."

"How would Thor do?" said Mary. "That's Norse."

Oxenford shook his head. "Too short." Mary burrowed in her Greek lexicon.

"Here's one," she said triumphantly. "Agamemnonides. Six syllables. How's that?"

"That'll do," said Oxenford thoughtfully. "Fancy Jimmy Wood yelling all that through the megaphone. Write it on a piece of paper, Mary."



"You're fit it this time, Mary. Those clothes are all right. You look like a first-class colt in 'em."



He was afraid to see her but little head bound with a wire comb, a shade over her eyes, and a cup of tea in either claw.



"What's his stable name?" asked Mary, alluding to the newly-christened Agateus mortals.

"They'll call him the Tub," said Oxenford. "But he's all right when the time comes. Give your father that tip from me."

Mary shook her head, all the girlish fun dying away from her mouth and pretty eyes. "I wish he'd give up betting," she said. Oxenford knew that her father's recklessness was a sore point with her. Honest John had lost his nerve and was drinking heavily. All Oxenford could do for Mary was to put Honest John on to a sure thing occasionally, to help him to retrieve his heavy losses.

"Well," Oxenford said, looking respectfully at the strip of paper Mary handed to him, "when we have company you'll have to say it for us, Mary."

When Mary passed her exam., Oxenford sent her the biggest floral horseshoe money could buy. Mary was appalled when she beheld it towering on her desk, but her pupils fortunately did not understand its significance, and thought her a whimsical creature when she first laughed and then cried over it. They had never been lifted to Oxenford's shoulder to see a winning jockey borne high above the crowd.

Oxenford was at the school to see Mary honoured. He approved of it all, but it hurt him somehow, the removed charm of it, so different from his own outdoor world of track and paddock—the flowers, the stained-glass windows, and the sweet girl voices.

If Honest John had had his way, Mary would not have been wearing that unassuming little plain dress. Mary's father! How was he to tell her that he had stopped for Honest John, and found him in no condition to accompany Oxenford to the school.

Mary found Oxenford, when the school broke up, leaning against a doorway, big

and silent, in an unusually gorgeous waistcoat. She had left a group of pupils and pupils' brothers, to go to him, and accepted his stumbling explanation about her father with a quivering mouth.

It was not the last hurt Honest John was to cause her; for he plunged on recklessly, sinking lower and lower, until finally he put a bullet through his head in a fit of desperate melancholia.

After it was all over, Mary saw Oxenford. She put aside his sympathy with a hardness quite unusual in her.

"They say he owes you any amount of money, Oxie," she said, her eyes fixed on his. "I want to go over accounts with you. I want to square everything."

Oxenford looked at her hopelessly. He knew that Honest John was in debt to him to an amount far beyond Mary's power to square, and inwardly he cursed the long tongues that had given her the tip.

"Why, it doesn't amount to anything," he said; "perhaps eight or nine hundred." It was a worthy lie, but it was of no use. Mary looked at him with bitter reproach.

"I know of twenty-five hundred he owed you myself," she said, "because he told me."

"He paid it," protested Oxenford, sulkily. "It ain't out a thou'. Honest, Mary!"

"Five thou', more likely," said Mary. "You've got to take the horse, Oxie."

"What horse?" growled Oxenford. He was at a loss for the next move, if Mary insisted on considering herself in his debt. The bigness of mind that lifted him out of commonness made it impossible for him to force his love on her when she was

handicapped by this ugly legacy. He knew she was fond of him, but his large humility led him to see nothing in this but the survival of her old childish fondness for the great fellow who had carried her about, her cheek against his stiff, red curls.

"You know the horse. The two-year-old," Mary explained. "Dad lost thousands on him, but he's overtrained. I think he's a good one."

"I'll take him and train him for you," said Oxenford, beginning to get interested.

"You are to take him and keep him," said Mary, fiercely.

"I never want to see or hear of a horse again. I hate racing, and everything connected with it."

Oxenford winced. He found it easy to forgive her outburst, but it cut him.

"How's it bred?" he asked.

Mary had been sorting her father's papers, he noticed, and she had a copy of the animal's family tree at hand. Oxenford glanced over it.

"He ought to be a good one," he said, folding up the paper slowly. The idea of taking possession of his old friend's one asset, the horse good old John had no doubt hoped would retrieve a fortune for Mary, was impossible. "But I can't take him, Mary. If he won a good race, you could sell him for twice as much as you owe me."

"I've tried to sell him, but they say he's no good," said Mary, hotly. "I can't get anything for him."

"Well, I tell you what I will do," said

Oxenford, brightening. "I'll take a half interest in him, and run him that way."

"Oh, no," objected Mary. "I couldn't do that."

Oxenford misunderstood her, and flushed uncomfortably.

"I forgot you were so down on racing," said he. "Of course, you wouldn't want to be dragged into it."

"It isn't that," Mary explained, remorsefully.

"Only I want to square things, Oxie, and you may lose on this deal. Henry Graves says Flittermouse will never be anything but an old selling-plate."

"Selling-plate himself!" said Oxenford, hotly. "Tried to get the horse from you for about three hundred, didn't he?"

"Yes," Mary confessed.

"We'll show Graves a thing or two," Oxenford said grimly, "if you want to give me half of Flittermouse."

Mary sat in thought for some minutes. "I don't see any other way out," she said.

"All right, partner," said Oxenford, cheerfully.

"We'll pull enough out of our first race to make us square."

But Flittermouse lost his first race. Mary, that sedate and dainty little lady, burst forth from her schoolroom when the last of the wicked small boys she had been keeping in had clumped out. Roxy and hatless, she fell upon the news-boy who was shrieking the sporting extra under her school-room window. She crushed the paper between her hands and tossed it aside after one glance



Thought her a whimsical creature when she first laughed and then cried over it.

down the column. She and Oxenford were heavy losers.

She dropped down on one of the tiny desks and sat for an hour or more blankly

staring at the wall. Between her and her father Oxie had been well robbed. And now she had forced him into running a third-rate horse for her. She was still sitting there when the charwoman came in and began to raise the dust with a huge brush. Mary rose, stiff and ill and cold. She scribbled a little note to Oxenford, but at the post-office withheld her hand.

"He'll be round to-night to tell me it's all his fault," she told herself, with forlorn humour.

Oxenford did turn up at eight o'clock, big and grave and troubled. He knew precisely how Mary was going to take it, and he was prepared for the fight of his life. Mary kept him waiting some time. She had taken rooms with two girls she knew. They were nice girls. One was big and brown and handsome, a stenographer to some important political man; the other a kindergartner, a wisp of a creature, elfish and humorous. They came in and entertained Oxenford, but the good opinion they had previously entertained of him died. It is not easy to make small talk with a big man who watches the door and scowls. Finally, Mary made her appearance, and they escaped gladly. She took her seat by the table, with a businesslike air, and looked across at Oxenford.

"Hard luck, wasn't it?" she said, cheerfully, though her small features were disfigured with much crying. "I've been trying to figure out our losses, and I think I've got it straight." She flattened out her little account-book preparatory to reading items to Oxenford. But he moved over to the table and rested his arms upon it.

"Stop, Mary," he said. "It's my loss, whatever it is. There isn't anything to speak of. It was my bad judgment in entering him for that race when he wasn't fit. I tried to push him, when I ought to have waited, and you ain't going to lose by my blunders."

He did not meet Mary's eyes, which was unfortunate, as he might have learned something to his advantage. When he looked at her, she was figuring stubbornly in the red-covered note-book.

"Did you hear me?" he persisted.

Mary pushed the book from her, and sat up very straight.

"Oxie," she said, deliberately, "I know your game. Partners if we win, but if we lose, you stand to pay. Well, I don't play it that way."

"Don't you believe what I say?" demanded Oxenford, with righteous heat.

Mary studied him a few minutes with a curious smile.

"Never mind what I believe," said she. "Is that horse any good at all?"

"He's sure to win later on," said Oxenford, with conviction.

"Well, then," said Mary, "you've either got to take my half of him, or let me pay you that money."

"You're awfully afraid I'm going to do a little for you," Oxenford said, with a sullenness so foreign to him that Mary stared in silence. She was looking very pale and tired, but Oxenford plunged on savagely. "What's a few thou'? If you cared anything, you wouldn't mind. I know you don't care for me or my horses. I never had the cheek to think you'd care, though you always were such a bonny little pal. But I've had enough of this. Square with me!" And he laughed. "What good's money and horses to me, if I see you making yourself ill with worry, and I can't stop you?"

He stopped, and Mary, as if released, got to her feet. But she held to the back of a big chair, for her knees were shaking.

"Don't you care for me at all?" demanded Oxenford.

Mary looked beyond him over his shoulder. Her small face was set, though she spoke gently enough.

"You're always good, Oxie," she said. "It's good of you to be sorry for me. You always were sorry for people that have a rough time of it. And it's so square of you not to pretend to care for me; but just to put it that way. Thank you a lot, Oxie, for all you've done for me, and for running the horse and that, but let's forget the rest of it." And she would have slipped by him had not Oxenford thrown out a detaining arm.

"Look here, Mary," he said. "If that's the way it is, I'm going to take my racing stable to France. I've been thinking of it for some time. I'd like to try it over there—unless you care to have me stay."

"Don't let me interfere with your plans," Mary said, politely.

Oxenford released her suddenly. "I won't," he growled. "And what's more, you're not going to bully me. I'm not going to take your half of the horse."

"Well then," said Mary, "we'll continue as we are. And I owe you that money."

"All right then, you do," said Oxenford, and added with some bitterness, "it's a wonder you don't ask me to put in a bill for training. Good-night, Mary. I'll keep you informed about the horse. And if you want me——"

"I shan't," Mary said, with dignity.

"If you want me," Oxenford repeated, stubbornly, "you'll have to send for me." And he went, without more hestitating.

Oxenford went to France. Mary subscribed to a French sporting paper, which was scarcely relevant to the career of Flittermouse, for that ornament of the turf remained on this side, and continued to lose races. Though the little kindergartner was engaged to a curate, and Miss Hutchins was a rigid Presbyterian, the fortunes of Mary's horse had a distinct fascination for them. The call of a sporting extra would send any one of the three flying down the three flights of stairs to get a copy.

At last luck changed, and Flittermouse won a race and a modest purse. Mary fluttered the cheque jubilantly before her two friends.

"But, Mary," Miss Hutchins said, with some reproach, "I thought you were going to sell the horse."

Mary set her little jaw. "Not yet," she said; "I'm not square with Oxie yet. He wouldn't touch a penny of the money if I sold Flittermouse, but this way he has to take his share."

She wrote occasional businesslike notes to Oxenford, always with reference to Flittermouse. Oxenford's replies were not always so businesslike, and he sometimes wandered from the subject of Flittermouse. He wanted to know how Mary was, and what she was doing, and whether she was not working too hard. She was not to let those ungrateful

little beggars wear her out. To Mary's mind, the truth would have been a bid for Oxenford's sympathy, so she told him very little about herself.

As a matter of fact, she had thrown herself into her work with the dogged enthusiasm characteristic of her. She grew big-eyed and thin, and the "ungrateful little beggars" got on her nerves. Also, after the manner of the youthful modern school-mistress, she attended various courses of lectures, and took endless notes. The little tin gods who were her superiors praised her devotion, and in the middle of the winter she broke down.

The little kindergartner came home in the winter dusk, and blundered about the sitting-room feeling for matches. Presently she stumbled over an inert bunch by the fireplace. Terrified, she hurried to light the gas. Mary sat up, with a cut on her forehead.

"I fell," she said, apologetically. "Things began to go round. My eyes are all wrong."

"Here's Helen!" The little kindergartner breathed a sigh of relief as the latch-key rattled in the door.

Miss Hutchins was their tower of strength.

"See a specialist," was Helen's dictum.

"I'll get off to-morrow and take you to the big man who treated my eyes."

"It's all nonsense," muttered Mary defiantly.

"The big man will say it's nothing." But, sadly enough, the big man was final and inescapable. No more work for the much-abused eyes. Some time in a darkened room, and then an operation. After that—perhaps— Mary came home white and pained.

That night's post brought a letter from Oxenford.

"Read it to me, will you, Dickie?" Mary said to the little kindergartner, for her eyes



She sat for an hour staring at the wall. Between her and her father Oxie had been well rubbed.

were bandaged. "And I shall have to get you to answer it, too, if you will? It's only business."

But the little kindergartner hesitated over the last paragraph, which was not strictly businesslike.

"Are you all right, Mary?" Oxenford wrote. "You don't say anything about yourself. I was a fool to come over here. But if you want me, you've only got to say the word. You know that."

"Never mind that part," Mary cut in. "Just write a few lines for me." The little kindergartner scribbled obediently to dictation.

"Is that all?" she asked rather wistfully. She had liked Oxenford's letter, and she was not satisfied with the brief reply Mary had dictated.

Mary laughed sharply. "Perhaps you think I ought to write the truth, Dicksie. Something like this: 'Dear Oxie, I'm tired out, and half blind, and I want you. Even if you're only sorry for me, I want you just the same'—you're not a good sport, Dicksie, or you wouldn't advise it. His address is in that little red book."

"I'm writing it." And abandoning once for all the rôle of an eminently truthful and self-righteous little kindergartner, she deliberately wrote a few lines across the foot of Mary's letter.

DEAR MR. OXFORD. — Mary will never forgive me for writing this, but I can't help it. She's ill, and her eyes are all wrong, and I think she would like to see you, but she will not let you know.

And signing her name hastily, she bundled the letter into its envelope.

"All right. Post it for me," said Mary, wearily.

And so the news came to Oxenford, who swore over it in mingled pain and tenderness. "Stubborn little brute!" he said, but with admiration rather than censure. "I've got to get out of this." But that squareness for which Mary loved him kept him chafing there in France until his affairs were fairly settled. Meantime his intentions got abroad.

Mary, putting out her hand one morning at breakfast, felt the familiar slippery surface of her French turf paper. She sighed, and pushed it from her.

"Want to hear the news?" asked the little kindergartner. She loathed the sheet with all her Puritanical little soul. To read aloud the contaminating columns of its sporting

notes required, on her part, the extreme of devotion, but she plunged in gallantly without hesitation.

"Oh!" she said, in a surprised voice, and stopped half-way down a column. She was not lacking in a certain delicate malice.

"Go, on," snapped Mary.

The few paragraphs were to the effect that Mr. James Oxenford, the well-known English turfman, was about to sell out his French stable, and return to England. It went on to elaborate some slurs at his expense.

"Of course it isn't true," said Miss Hutchins, soothingly, for Mary was in a white rage before the finish.

"True!" said Mary. "True!" And she laughed. "You don't know Oxie. Except Colonel Frayne, he's the best sport I ever knew. Go on, Dicksie."

Dicksie finished the article. It closed with a statement that Mr. Oxenford's retirement was perhaps due to the fact that he was crippled by recent heavy losses.

Mary plucked off her bandage and blinked at them like an invalid kitten.

"Well," she said, "I'm going to write one letter before I go blind." And she started rather uncertainly for the sitting-room, in spite of a thunder-gust of protest.

DEAR OXIE (she wrote):

They say you're a heavy loser. I wish you hadn't gone over there. I haven't touched the "Quentin" money, and I want you to do something for me. I want you to take it, for it really never was mine. You know that I owe it to you. Please, please, Oxie, don't send this cheque back to me.

Yours, MARY.

How dare those people say such things about you!

Oxenford started homewards the day after he got that letter. He smiled his quiet smile over the villainous pink clipping. The old racing gossips had done a big thing for him when they printed those vicious paragraphs. It had been a mischievous lie, yet he owed them something, since through it Mary had come to write that letter. Plucky little pal! Not a word about going blind, either. He had been going back, but without definite hope, merely to be of service to her if he could, but now France couldn't hold him another day. Somehow he knew that she cared. "Bonny little pal, who wouldn't let them blackguard me!"

Oxenford reached London on the day when Flittermouse was to have his try for the Greenwich Sweepstakes. But Oxenford was not thinking of Flittermouse as he made

his way westward. When he reached the landing outside Mary's room he almost fell over Miss Hutchins. She was talking, in a low tone to an old man of a distinctly sporting type. Osenford recognized Con Dalaney, who had been Honest John's driver for years.

"Hello, Con," he said heartily. "Come to see Miss Mary?"

"Yes, sir. That is, I have to tell her—" Con stammered with such trouble in his face that Miss Hutchins hastened to explain.

"It's that wretched Flittermouse," she said, indignantly. "They say there's something wrong with him, and he can't race."

Osenford remembered and understood. "That foot of his again?" Old Con nodded. "Too bad, but it can't be helped. You needn't wait, Con; I'll tell Miss Mary."

Old Con hesitated. He knew very little outside of horses, but he was devoted to Mary, and somehow the idea was fixed in his old head that Miss Mary was worrying over what she owed Mr. Osenford. Con knew something of Honest John's affairs.

"Mr. Osenford," he muttered. Osenford turned on him, and under his surprised look Con found his words with difficulty. "You won't push Miss Mary for the money," he said. "The horse ain't done yet, sir."

"You old fool!" said Osenford, but not unkindly. "Get out!" and waited for Miss Hutchins to lead the way into the room.

But that young woman faced him desperately, her face almost tragic under the tiny jet of gas that flickered on the stairway.

"I don't believe she'll see you, Mr. Osenford."

"Why not?" asked Osenford. "Did she find out Miss Murray wrote to me?"

"Yes," Miss Hutchins admitted, somewhat startled by the presence of this big, quiet horseman. "Dickie's curate made her tell Mary last night."

Osenford did not curse Dickie's curate, but his expression spoke for him. There were tears in Miss Hutchins' dark eyes.

"If Flittermouse wins this race, she says she is going to take the money and go off somewhere. She never wants to see any of us again."

"How about me?" asked Osenford, not sorry that Flittermouse had a bad foot.

"She says she can never face you again. She doesn't want you to think she's a whimpering little blind beggar."

Osenford did not smile at that, for he could imagine Mary's misery.

"But I've got to see her, you know," he said, frowning. "Tell her it's Con."

And Miss Hutchins did, regardless of the clamour of a Presbyterian conscience. Presently Osenford, waiting in the little sitting room, heard Mary moving through the hall. She came very slowly, and Osenford had time to think of what he intended to say. It had not occurred to him that she was feeling her way until she entered, and then he saw that her eyes were bandaged.

"Well?" she said. "Well, Con?" And because there was an oppressive silence, Osenford could see her shrink in expectation of something unpleasant to come, and longed to simplify matters by taking her in his arms, and telling her a few plain truths. Yet little and half-blind and hard up, Mary was Mary, and had to be treated accordingly. She felt her way quite close to him and gripped his coat sleeve.



At his voice Mary grew rigid. Then she reached up and ran her small fingers across his face. "Oh, it's you, Con," she said.

"Don't tell me he lost, Con," she said.

"No," muttered Oxenford. "No, but he can't run."

At his voice Mary grew rigid for a moment. Then she reached up very deliberately and ran her small fingers across his face.

"Oh, it's you, Oxie," she cried, and raised her hands to her eyes as if to push up the bandage. But Oxenford caught her wrist.

"Don't do that," he said in alarm. "You'll hurt your eyes."

"I want to look at you, Oxie," Mary said simply.

"What!" said Oxenford. "Then what do you tell your friends to keep me out for? I'm afraid you must believe some of those lies about me after all."

"Oxie!" cried Mary, her face quivering, "you know I'd never believe anything about you that wasn't kind and square and all right. You know it."

"You must have believed some of it," Oxenford persisted, "or you wouldn't have sent me the cheque. Did you think I'd take it?"

"I was afraid you wouldn't," Mary said, smiling faintly.

"Well, you were right there," Oxenford returned deliberately. "If you cared anything about me, I might have taken it."

"I do care, Oxie," Mary protested. "I do care."

"Oh, that way," scoffed Oxenford. "A lot of good that does me!"

"Oxie," said Mary suddenly, "if I loved you, would you take that money?"

"No," said Oxenford with an effort. He found it hard to be square just then. "Because I don't need it, Mary."

"Then you never lost anything?" Mary demanded, her face hardening.

"Not enough to count," Oxenford admitted.

Mary turned on him like a little cat. "I wish you had," she flung at him savagely. "I wish something would happen to you. But you're so beastly lucky." This was enigmatic, but Oxenford began to see things clearer.

"I don't see how you make that out," he said slowly. "I may be lucky with money and horses, but how about the rest of it? You know that little pal I used to have? I thought sometime I could get her to care for me, but it's no good. She's gone back on me."

"She hasn't!" Mary said fiercely. "She hasn't. If they'd let her alone she'd have asked you to come back herself. But she was afraid if she asked you now, you'd come out of pity."

"Pity! oh rot," said Oxenford, brutally. "That girl had more sense than you, Mary. She knew I loved you."

Mary wavered where she stood.

"Oxie," she said, and a great fear grew on her face, "suppose that pal of yours goes blind?"

"She won't," said Oxenford. "I won't let her."

But Mary went on:

"She was afraid of that. And she wanted to be square with you before—before——" She found it impossible to finish that sentence. "If Flittermouse had won, Oxie——"

"Oh, hang Flittermouse!" growled Oxenford. "I'm sick of horses. I love you, and all you talk about is getting square with me. You don't seem to understand, Mary. I've loved you for years, and I'm going to marry you, Flittermouse or no Flittermouse!"

Mary freed her eyes with one desperate gesture.

"Oxie," she said, staring at him, "you're sorry for me!"

"Sorry for you?" Oxenford repeated. "Sorry for you? No, I'm not sorry for you. I think you're a regular little brute, Mary."

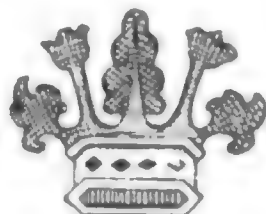
Mary put out her hands to him with a laugh that was tremulously near tears.

"Oh, don't, Oxie," she said, "don't! I thought it was just like you to marry me because I was such an unlucky little girl. And I didn't want that, because I cared so much."

Oxenford swept her into his arms.

"I know," he said, and held her close. "My bonny little pal!"

THE



END.

A mallet, showing the variety of strokes that may be made from a motor car.



From a photograph.

MOTOR POLO.

A FAST AND FURIOUS GAME, RENDERED MORE EXCITING BY THE USE OF AUTOMOBILES IN THE PLACE OF PONIES.

MOTOR POLO is the newest twentieth century game. Nimble little racing motor cars replace the trained pony on the polo field, and this already fast and furious game is being transformed into a yet more exciting sport. In motor polo an entirely new sensation may be experienced which will provide excitement to the most satiated nerves.

So soon as it became known that the automobile offered an attractive substitute for the polo pony, the new twentieth century game rapidly grew in favour. The first exhibition of the possibilities of the mechanical steeds was given by Mr. Joshua Crane, jun., a well-known American millionaire and athlete, on a fashionable American Polo Club's field. This gentleman is a skilful polo player, and an expert chauffeur—two most essential qualities.

The first regular game of auto-polo, recently played near New York City, attracted a great crowd of both automobile and polo enthusiasts. The players, moreover, were not only adepts with the polo mallet, but were equally skilled in handling automobiles. The mounts used were nimble little machines of comparatively light weight.

The game was commenced in the conventional manner by "throwing the ball in" near the middle of the field. The teams lined up in the regular polo formations in mid field. The players grasped their mallets firmly and

awaited the signal. The referee, with his machine headed directly down the field, threw the ball in over the back of his car and instantly dashed away at full speed. He was well out of the way of the players by the time they had rushed in a whirling mass on the ball. The ball was in play in less time than it takes to tell. The automobiles came across the field at full speed, only stopping when almost on top of the ball. The players rose from their seats and leaned right over the front of the cars to strike. There was a clatter of mallets, and an instant later the ball went spinning down the field on a long drive.

It was but the work of an instant for the machines to wheel at an angle of forty-five degrees and dash down the smooth polo field in an irregular line. It was clear that the cars gave almost as much opportunity for jockeying in such a race as horses. On reaching the ball one man ran directly over it and then leaning back gave it a sharp stroke to the side without changing the position of his machine. It would have been practically impossible to have made such a shot from horseback. The entire crowd of puffing, whirling machines wheeled quickly to the side and again dashed off at breakneck speed after the ball.

It would be difficult to picture a scene more full of action and colour. The players

leaned eagerly forward as the machines darted to and fro with bewildering speed. The game was several times halted, but the delays were trifling compared with those common to an ordinary polo match. At a critical moment one machine balked suddenly, but investigation showed that it had merely run out of water. There were several sharp mix-ups when the machines came together with a crash, the impact being heard all over the field. But beyond a few scratches and dents the mechanical steeds were, apparently, none the worse for the encounter.

There is less danger in being thrown from an automobile than from the back of a polo pony. In suddenly stopping one rider lost his balance and was dashed headfirst over the wind breaker of his machine. Another car which was bearing down upon him rapidly was stopped just in time. The fallen player's own machine passed harmlessly over him. Although the game played with automobiles is much faster, it is apparently less wearing upon the players than ordinary polo. It is naturally much easier to sit on a comfortable upholstered seat than to ride a spirited horse. This, again, is an advantage, since it leaves the player fresher and with more energy for making shots, which are, of course, the real business of the game. One can scarcely picture a more spirited sight than that of the long file of automobile polo steeds dashing across the closely cropped field, the players half rising from their seats

as though to urge their steeds to faster pace, and with the ball sailing on merrily ahead.

This game demonstrated beyond question that the motor-cars possess great and unrivalled advantages over the familiar polo pony. The automobile seat places the player nearer the ground than does the smallest polo pony. It is easy to regulate the height of the auto's seat, while the height of a polo pony remains a fixed quantity. In being nearer to the ground the player can reach further and deal more effective blows.

The automobile mount also offers much greater opportunity for delivering both front and back strokes. The old-fashioned player is obliged to twitch his pony's head to one side or the other and lean far forward to get at the ball. The same stroke may be made from a motor-car without rising from the seat or for a moment losing control of the machine. A polo player mounted upon the most agile pony, again, must manoeuvre his steed for a second or so at least, in order to get a clear way for his back stroke. It is a very simple matter to lean over the back seat of a motor-carriage and swing the mallet for a full side stroke.

The automobile has the advantage of being under more instant control than the most carefully trained and alert polo pony. It may be started or stopped more quickly, and is far more nimble in making sharp turns. The speed attained is also far greater than is possible with any pony, and the game is therefore rendered faster and more exciting.



When the car is stopped suddenly, the player sometimes loses his balance, and is thrown headfirst out of the vehicle.

FOUNDERS OF MODERN CREEDS.

FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT SOME ENGLISH RELIGIOUS DENOMINATIONS.

THE many-sided character of Christianity is strongly indicated by the numerous divisions at present existing in Christendom, and this is perhaps some small recompense for the weakness and lessening of missionary efficiency that necessarily results from division.

It has been said that the Christian religion propagates itself by fission, or division from the parent stem; and while such a statement is a perversion of the real truth, it derives not a little support from many of the phenomena that have marked modern religious history.

We live in an age when authority is at a discount. Children no longer reverence their parents as they did in days of old; in social and political matters each man forms his opinions for himself; in matters of religion, private judgment and liberty of thought are regarded as the rightful heritage of everybody, whether qualified to form a correct opinion or not. Whether this is an advantage or the opposite, this is not the place to discuss; we simply record the fact.

There is, to a large extent, the secret of the multiplicity of modern denominations or sects. Any man who is dissatisfied with the teaching at his own church or chapel, feels himself at liberty to promulgate his views in whatever manner he pleases, and if he is influential enough to secure a following, he is the potential founder of a new sect. The question at issue may be a serious one, in which case he will probably secure many adherents; or it may be some trivial matter that will die out with its originator. It may be a valid question of conscience, or it may be a mere point of personal piety.

To this is due the fact that the last return of the Registrar-General is enabled to

announce that there are upwards of two hundred creeds and denominations having registered places of worship in the United Kingdom. Many of these so-called sects consist of but one congregation, meeting in a tiny room. In some cases the distinction is merely due to the eccentric description given by the leader of a mission. Temperance and benefit societies, and philanthropic bodies, that have for some reason thought it advisable to have their premises registered, are all included in this marvellous collection of "sects."

As a matter of fact, instead of over two hundred, there are only about twenty *bona fide* Protestant sects in the United Kingdom. This, of course, leaves out of the reckoning the Anglican, Roman, and Greek Churches.

The palm for antiquity amongst the Protestant sects must probably be awarded to the Baptists, who claim to date from the days of the Apostles—not to mention St. John the Baptist. But this claim needs to be taken with considerable caution. The distinctive practice of the Baptists—that of baptism by immersion

upon a personal confession of faith—undoubtedly prevailed in apostolic days, though it does not necessarily follow that the baptism of infants was excluded.

It would appear that in the days of Tertullian—who died about A.D. 220—there were Christians who held views more or less identical with those of the modern Baptists, and from time to time throughout the middle ages the existence of such opinions can be traced, but no such thing as a society or congregation of Baptists seems to have existed until about the commencement of the sixteenth century.



Thomas Munzer, a preacher of Allstedt, who founded the Baptist Denomination in Germany soon after the commencement of the Reformation.

The Baptist denomination had its origin in a movement that sprang up in Germany soon after the commencement of the Reformation, when Thomas M nser, a preacher in Alstedt, in Thuringia, adopted what became known as Anabaptist views—the name signifying one who baptised again. He soon gathered around him a considerable number of adherents, and his opinions spread somewhat widely.

Leaving Alstedt, he removed to Waldshut, on the borders of Switzerland, which for some time continued to be the headquarters of the new movement. Anabaptist views soon spread through Switzerland, the Netherlands, and parts of Germany, and those who held them were subjected to the severest persecutions, largely on account of the advanced Socialistic attitude adopted by many of them, which culminated in Franconia in the outbreak known as the Peasants' War of 1525, during the course of which M nser was captured and killed, being one of the very few founders of religious sects who have met death in connection with the battle-field.

After his death the sect continued to grow, but unhappily became identified with extreme forms of religious and political fanaticism. In 1532, a body of Anabaptists, under the leadership of John Mathieson, a baker of Haarlem, and John Rockhold, a tailor of Leyden, attacked and captured the city of Munster, where Mathieson proclaimed himself King of Mount Zion. He was soon afterwards killed in a sortie against the Bishop of Munster's troops, and his colleague was executed when the Bishop re-occupied the city.

About the same time the movement seems to have spread to England, for in 1535 ten Dutch Anabaptists were executed in this country, and in the following year Henry VIII. issued a proclamation against them. Two

years later seven followers of the new doctrines were burnt at Smithfield.

The first Anabaptist congregation was formed in London on September 12, 1533, by a number of persons who seceded from an Independent body, and six years later a second congregation was reported. In 1661, a party of some eighty or ninety of them, under the leadership of Thomas Venner, a wine-cooper, figured in a riot which took place in connection with one of their meetings. The military were called in to restore order, when Venner and his followers drew their weapons, and seven soldiers were killed. For this, Venner and sixteen others were executed.

From this it will be seen that the beginnings of the Baptist body were characterised by

circumstances that do not usually attend the establishment of a religion. It is, however, necessary to distinguish between the conscientious views on the teaching of the New Testament about baptism, which were of the essence of the Anabaptist position, and the political fanaticism of its



The oldest Nonconformist Chapel in England. It is at Hemmingham, in Wiltshire, and dates from 1260.

early adherents. It need hardly be added that Baptists at the present day are entirely free from the extravagances of their founders, and that no more law-abiding and sincerely religious and philanthropic people exist than the denomination which produced the world-famed preacher, C. H. Spurgeon, and which has the distinction of being the first of the Protestant sects in Great Britain to send out missionaries to the heathen.

The growth of the denomination is indicated by the fact that recent official statistics show 4,012 chapels, 2,030 ministers, and 372,998 members in the British Isles.

Independency—now more commonly known as Congregationalism—came into existence about the reign of Queen Elizabeth, as a development of the Puritan movement.

It can hardly be said to have been founded by any one man, though Robert Browne (1550-1631) was the first to publicly advocate Independent principles. He was a man of university training, and had been a schoolmaster before he devoted himself to itinerant preaching and agitating against those features of the Church that were distasteful to the Puritans.

He maintained that every congregation of believing Christians constituted a complete church, with full power of self-government—independently of bishops, synods, or any other external interference. In this way the name of the new sect originated.

Browne gathered round him many adherents, some of whom were a doubtful gain, for his system appealed with peculiar force to malcontents who were restless of control by authority. The Brownists—as they were at first called—increased so rapidly that in 1593 there were stated to be

20,000 of them in England alone, and an Act of Parliament was passed against them. As a result, many of them accompanied Browne to the Continent, where congregations were established at Amsterdam, Rotterdam,



Alexander Elphinstone, who headed the first body of secedents from the Wesleyan Convention, shortly after the death of the Rev. John Wesley.

Leyden, and other places. A minister at Leyden, named Robinson, who had formerly presided over a small meeting at Calneborough, now won great influence and

modified some of the more extravagant features introduced by Browne, and for this reason he has sometimes been regarded as the true founder of the body.

In 1606 or 1616, Henry Jacob, one of the exiles, returned to England and established an Independent meeting in Southwark, having first defined his position in a petition to King James. As the new body was non-political, and free from the extravagances of the Anabaptists, it was left in comparative peace, and grew steadily.

Browne had now returned to the Church of England, and subsequently became rector of a parish in Northamptonshire. He seems

to have spent a turbulent time there, for he was a headstrong, passionate man, and finally ended his days in gaol as the outcome of a violent assault on one of his neighbours.

During the Commonwealth, under the protection of Cromwell, who was one of their adherents, the Independents became the most powerful religious body in England, and numbers of their ministers were placed in churches and rectories whose lawful occupants had been expelled for refusing to discontinue the Prayer Book services that they had solemnly promised at their ordination to maintain. The intruders, to the number of 2,000, were expelled at the Restoration by the Act of Uniformity



William O'Brian, a preacher in Cornwall, who originated another offshoot at Weymouth—the Bible Christians—owing to a rupture with the Conference.

of 1662, and many of the former clergy who survived were restored to their livings.

The Conventicle Acts of 1663 and 1670 pressed hard on the Independents, who displayed the courage of their convictions under the most difficult and dangerous circumstances. John Bunyan, author of *The Pilgrim's Progress*—though he held Anabaptist views—was at this time minister of the Bedford Meeting, and twice endured terms of imprisonment for conscience sake.

Toleration was granted in 1689, and the new sect flourished considerably through the eighteenth century, though the period was one of pretty general religious apathy and stagnation. The Congregational Union of England and Wales was founded in 1825, the new name being considered more positive and better indicative of the governing principles of the denomination. At the present time Congregationalism stands second amongst the Protestant Dissenting bodies of the kingdom, and displays commendable activity in all good works. In the British Isles it has 4,873 chapels, 3,121 ministers and 436,279 members.

Next in importance in this country to the Church of England, we must rank the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion, which still retains much of the spirit of the great body within which it sprang into being.

Its founder, John Wesley (1703-1791), was a clergyman and Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford. There, in conjunction with his brother Charles, he formed a little society of graduates, who practised weekly Communion and met frequently for devotional purposes. They carefully observed the feasts and fasts of the Church and kept a simple rule of life, being what would now be called rather "High Church" in their principles. The "Varsity wits" promptly nicknamed them

"Methodists"—in allusion to the method or rule by which they lived, and thus came into being the name by which a large Nonconformist body is now known.

John Wesley left Oxford and went to Georgia as chaplain to the British colony, and while there he passed through a period of spiritual crisis ending in a great accession of inward peace and assurance, which he ever afterwards regarded as a conversion. This led him to adopt the view that such a definite crisis is necessary in the spiritual history of every Christian, and that the chief object of the faithful minister should be to bring it about. This was the keynote to his subsequent career.

Returning to England in 1738, he commenced the course of evangelistic labours that was only to end with his death fifty three years later. He soon found that he was not to be left to pursue his course unhindered. In all directions he found the bishops opposed to him and the pulpits closed against him—not on the ground of any definite unorthodoxy in his teaching, but through fear of enthusiasm, which at that time was looked upon as a most dangerous thing in religion!

Thus it came about that Wesley's labours were wrought chiefly in the open-air, and in secular buildings. He encouraged his converts to attend the regular services in their parish churches, and especially to frequent the Holy Communion, but to assemble in societies for mutual edification at such times as would not clash with the Church services. Devout men, who possessed the gift of speech, were encouraged to become lay-preachers, but any attempt to establish a separatist ministry was altogether repugnant to the spirit of Wesley, who down to the day of his death professed firm allegiance to the Church of England.



George Fox, the founder of the Society of Friends. At the age of 22 he wandered about the country in poverty, and by his deep piety, sincerity and earnestness obtained many followers.

cottages and other secular buildings. He encouraged his converts to attend the regular services in their parish churches, and especially to frequent the Holy Communion, but to assemble in societies for mutual edification at such times as would not clash with the Church services. Devout men, who possessed the gift of speech, were encouraged to become lay-preachers, but any attempt to establish a separatist ministry was altogether repugnant to the spirit of Wesley, who down to the day of his death professed firm allegiance to the Church of England.

The Methodist Societies grew at an amazing rate—the simple condition of membership being “an earnest desire to flee from the wrath to come”—and as they were nearly everywhere frowned upon by the clergy, it is not surprising that they tended more and more to shake themselves loose from the Church. During his lifetime, however, Wesley's influence was sufficient to prevent any open rupture, but after his death a great change soon took place; the preachers assumed all the functions of regular ministers, public services were held during Church hours, and little by little the remaining links binding the Methodists to the Church were snapped, and Wesleyanism became a separate denominational body.

Since then, its history has been one of steady progress, in spite of several secessions or “splits.” The most recently published statistics for Great Britain give 8,534 chapels, 2,238 ministers, and 496,710 members.

The first of the secessions took place almost immediately after John Wesley's death in 1791. For the last few years of his life, he had, by the very force of his personality, and by the feelings of loyalty that his saintly character inspired, held things together in spite of various disturbing influences that were at work beneath the surface. But the years that followed his death saw a great upheaval.

Wesley left the governing power in the hands of the Legal Hundred—a kind of board of trustees, composed entirely of preachers—and at first the general body of the members had no voice whatever in the management of affairs, but simply had the privilege of paying the bills. There were two parties among the people—Progressives and Conservatives. The former were for placing more power in the hands of the people, and for establishing the Connexion as a separate sect; while the latter upheld the authority

of the Legal Hundred, and were disposed to maintain as much union with the Church as possible.

The Progressives found an able leader in Alexander Kilham, who had been accepted as a preacher by John Wesley in 1785, and stationed in the Horncastle Circuit. A few months after the founder's death, Mr. Kilham issued a letter in defence of a preacher who had broken the rules of the Connexion, and for this he was censured by the Conference of 1792.

Three years later he issued a pamphlet, entitled “The Progress of Liberty,” in which he vigorously insisted on the need for a more democratic system throughout the Connexion, and for this he was expelled by the Conference.

In the spring of 1797, an old Baptist chapel at Leeds was purchased for Mr. Kilham and his supporters, and after one more attempt to persuade the Conference to admit the laity to a fair share in the administration of the business of the Connexion, a little band of about sixteen persons met in the newly-purchased chapel and formally constituted the Methodist New Connexion, calling it at first the New Itinerancy. The Rev. A. Kilham was appointed



Gift by permission of the Headquarters of the Salvation Army.

General Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army. He was formerly a Methodist New Connexion preacher, but resigned that position and devoted himself to evangelistic work in the East End of London. The Salvation Army is now one of the most remarkable religious organizations in the world.

the first secretary. It will thus be seen that the origin of the New Connexion was due to ecclesiastical and not to doctrinal causes. Both bodies continued identical in all points save that of government.

In the New Connexion the ministers and the laity have an equal voice in the Conference. To a large extent Wesleyan Methodism has now adopted the very principles that caused the secession, and there is no very weighty reason for the continued existence of the New Connexion as a separate body. Reunion has long been in the air, but events move very slowly in the desired direction.

The New Connexion has never been a very numerous body; at the present time it has in England 451 chapels, 193 ministers,

and 33,510 members. It is a remarkable fact that the Connexion loses, through removals, etc., the whole of its membership every ten years.

Primitive Methodism, which at its inception claimed—as its name suggests—to go back to the original spirit and method of Wesley's movement, dates from 1810, when it arose in Staffordshire under the leadership of Mr. Hugh Bourne.

This gentleman had been a Wesleyan local preacher, but two years previously had been removed from that office, for disobedience to certain regulations laid down by the Conference. He had been conspicuous in organising camp meetings of the type then common in America, and as these open-air gatherings were often characterised by scenes of great excitement and extravagance, the authorities of Wesleyan Methodism found it necessary to take steps to check their further development.

Hugh Bourne and those who worked with him would brook no restraint in what they believed to be necessary evangelistic work, and so they severed their connection with the main body. Possessing no buildings, they went into the highways and hedges, held open-air services, and accepted accommodation of the barest kind. They were men of marvellous energy and self-denial, and in the course of a few years achieved wonderful success.

At the present time Primitive Methodism is the largest of the offshoots from Wesleyanism. The latest published statistics for the United Kingdom give 4,314 chapels, 1,248 ministers, and 105,651 members.

The rise of the Bible Christians was very similar to that of the last-named Connexion. William O'Bryan, a Wesleyan local preacher in Cornwall—a man filled with the religious fervour peculiar to the county—broke through the bounds laid down by the Wesleyan Conference for the conduct of religious meetings, and, after repeated refusals to conform, was expelled in 1815.

With a few of his friends he started evangelistic work on lines that specially appealed to the Cornish character. In a word, it was mainly a local adaptation of Primitive Methodism, though it never became connected with that body. The followers were at first known as Bryanites—a name which is still popularly used in Cornwall. They are by no means numerous, and are chiefly to be found in the West of England. The latest statistics report 793 chapels, 247 ministers, and 31,722 members.

The United Methodist Free Church has been formed by the union and absorption of various small secessions from the Wesleyan body at one time and another, and it is hoped that in the near future the New Connexion and the Bible Christians will unite with it, thus forming one strong Connexion in the place of three comparatively weak ones, which differ only in certain small details of government, none of them involving any vital principle. At the present time it possesses in the United Kingdom

1,358 chapels, 355 ministers, and 74,943 members.

Turning now to a denomination of very different character, the Society of Friends demands our notice. Under the popular, but entirely misleading, name of the Quakers, its adherents have been generally associated with eccentric simplicity of apparel, including such old-fashioned items as poke bonnets and shovel hats, and with an inveterate habit of using the pronouns "thee" and "thou," and entirely repudiating all titles of secular or ecclesiastical distinction. These little

peculiarities are, however, now quite extinct, except among a few of the oldest members in country places.

The Society was founded in the middle of the seventeenth century by George Fox, a deeply pious man, whose mind seems to have been slightly turned by his extreme religious fervour. At the age of twenty-two he believed himself called to preach the



Lady Huntington, the wife of the 1st Lord of the Council, of Huntington's Connexion, originally founded to provide accommodation for dissenting holding Methodist views.

Gospel, and wandered about the country in a state of deep poverty, and by his evident sincerity and earnestness gained many followers.

The chief peculiarity of his teaching—which was distinctly tinged with Quietism—was a certain doctrine of the "inward light," or the individual inspiration of each believer to such a degree that he would be to a large extent independent of external teaching or guidance. The danger of such teaching was obvious, and it soon showed itself in wild extravagances on the part of some of the early Quakers, individuals going about the country naked or clad in sackcloth. A regular ministry, the Sacraments, and all ecclesiastical organisation were entirely repudiated, and the meetings of the "Friends" followed no set order, any member taking part as he or she felt led.

Notwithstanding severe persecution, the new sect grew rapidly, but of late years it has ceased to be an important factor in the religious life of Great Britain, where there are now said to be about 17,000 members. Extravagances marked only the early days of the Quakers, who soon settled down into a highly respectable and benevolent body of people, who were, as a rule, singularly prosperous in worldly business.

Resembling them in their repudiation of the Sacraments, the ministry, and ecclesiastical organisation—but in no other respect—come the Plymouth Brethren, who prefer to be known simply as Christians or Brethren.

They originated at Plymouth, about the year 1830, when a number of extreme Evangelicals in the Church of England started independent meetings under the leadership of a clergyman named Darby.

Divisions soon took place and have been happening ever since, the Brethren being more notable for their readiness to divide over trifling questions of doctrine and Biblical exegesis than for anything else.

There are meetings of Brethren in most towns, but these societies—which are usually very small—are of the most exclusive type and have no real connection with one another. They have no ministers, but they meet weekly to "break bread," and as a general rule they believe in baptism by immersion. They rarely adopt a friendly attitude towards

Christians of other denominations, and no statistics of their numerical strength are available.

The Salvation Army is now too well known in most parts of the world to need description, and yet it only dates from the early sixties, when the Rev. William Booth, a Methodist New Connexion minister, resigned his position in that body, and devoted himself to evangelistic work in East London. Known successively as the East London Revival Society, the Hallelujah Band, the Christian Mission, and the Salvation Army, this militant sect has "bombarded the devil's strongholds" in every town



From a print in the Ashmolean collection.

The Rev. Edward Irving, the founder of the Catholic Apostolic Church. He was a famous preacher in the Scottish Presbyterian body, but was expelled from office on account of his extraordinary views about the approach of the Second Advent, and the reappearance of miraculous gifts in the Church.

and village throughout Great Britain, Australia, and the United States, to say nothing of the Continent of Europe, India and South Africa.

Eagerly adopting every device, however outrageous, that might further its object in arresting the attention of the irreligious, the Salvation Army has succeeded at one time or another in making itself the talk of the day, and has gathered vast numbers of adherents. Its converts have displayed no small courage in open-air preaching and processions—often in the teeth of determined

opposition—but of late the methods of the Army have grown more quiet and sober. There are stated to be over 13,500 "officers" at the present time carrying on the work of the Army in twenty-nine different languages.

We next come to the little denomination which calls itself by the sounding title of the Catholic Apostolic Church—a name which most of us associate, not with a small sect, but with the general body of the faithful. The founder of the denomination was the Rev. Edward Irving, a famous preacher in the Scottish Presbyterian body, who was finally expelled from office for adopting extraordinary views about the approach of the Second Advent, and the reappearance of miraculous gifts in the Church.

He was generally considered to have become mentally unsound, and to the dismay of his friends he identified himself with some people who claimed to possess the gift of prophecy, to speak with tongues, and the like. Soon afterwards he founded the so-called Catholic Apostolic Church, better known as the Irvingite body, which accepts most of the doctrines believed by orthodox Christians, but in addition holds the view that it is entrusted with the work of preparing the world for the Second Advent.

The Irvingites have four orders of ministers: Angels, prophets, evangelists, and pastors; and the ritual is of a very elaborate character, altar lights, vestments and incense being used. The number of congregations is extremely small, and the sect is a thing apart, having no relations with other bodies.

The Countess of Huntingdon's Connection is the survival of an evangelistic effort made by Selina, Lady Huntingdon—who died in 1791—to provide accommodation for George Whitefield and other clergymen who had adopted Methodist views, and were in consequence excluded from Church pulpits.

Lady Huntingdon made them her domestic chaplains, and built a number of chapels—nominally for her private use;—in which they might minister. In this way she was able to give them a certain official status, and to legalise their ministrations.

Many of these chapels have now ceased to exist through leases lapsing, and some of the congregations have united with other bodies. Originally over a hundred, there are now only thirty-seven of them, which are administered by a Board of Trustees. The services are almost identical with what prevails in extreme Low Church circles in the Church of England, but the ministers are to all practical purposes Congregationalists.

The New Jerusalem Church—more commonly called the New Church—consists of some seventy-nine societies, with forty-three ministers and 6,500 members, and is a sect which exists to promulgate the teachings of Emmanuel Swedenborg, who died in 1772. He was a Swedish scientist of great attainments, who claimed to see visions and receive divine illumination. He wrote many extraordinary books, chiefly dealing with life in the spiritual world, concerning which he published extraordinary statements.

He cannot rightly be called the founder of



Emmanuel Swedenborg, a Swedish scientist, whose followers are called the New Jerusalem Church.

the sect, for such a notion seems never to have entered his mind, and during his lifetime he had no recognised followers. After his death, two clergymen who had adopted his views formed a little society for study, and about the year 1787 it was constituted on a definite basis as a new denomination, its first chapel being in Eastcheap.

We have purposely omitted the more extravagant types of religious belief, such as the Peculiar People, the Shakers, the Jez-reclites, the followers of "the Modern Elijah," and the like. They are chiefly interesting as showing the readiness of ill-instructed people to run after anything novel in religious ideas.

THE RED TRIANGLE

By ARTHUR MORRISON.

Illustrated by
SIDNEY PAGET.

BEING SOME FURTHER CHRONICLES OF MARTIN HEWITT: INVESTIGATOR.
THE CASE OF THE BURNT BARN.

I.

EVERARD MYATT — or Catherton Hunt—was lost again. Martin Hewitt had been wholly successful, for he had recovered Mr. Bell's missing bonds; but the police caught neither of the conspirators. Investigations at Henning's lodgings showed that careful preparations must have been made for an immediate flight if it should become necessary, and the flight had taken place. The man in the hospital, who had been knocked down in carrying from one to the other the extraordinary message that Hewitt had deciphered, remained insensible for a few days, and could not be questioned till some time later still. Then he professed to have forgotten all about the message on which he was going when he met his accident, and the medical men in attendance informed the police that it was quite possible that the fellow's statement was true. He said that he *did* carry messages sometimes, when he could get a job, but he could remember nothing of the message of the key, nor of who had sent him, nor where he was to go. Nevertheless, the police, although they professed to accept his statement, kept a wary eye on him after his discharge from the hospital, for they had more than a suspicion that he knew more than he chose to tell. But nothing more was heard of the accomplices till another case of Martin Hewitt's brought the news, and that in a manner strange enough.

The matter began, as so many matters of Hewitt's did, with the receipt of a telegram, followed immediately by another. For the first having been handed in at a country

office not very long before eight the previous evening, it was not delivered at Hewitt's office till the morning, in accordance with the ancient manners and customs observed in the telegraphic system of this country. It had been despatched from Throckham, in Middlesex, and it was simply a very urgently-worded request to Hewitt to come at once, signed "Claire Peytral." The second telegram, which came even as Hewitt was reading the first, on his arrival at his office, ran thus:—

Did you receive telegram? See newspapers. Matter life or death. Would come personally but cannot leave mother. Pray answer.—PEYTRAL.

The answer went instantly that Hewitt would come by the next train, for he had seen the morning paper and from that knew the urgency of the case. But a consultation of the railway guide showed that trains to Thockham were fewer than one might suppose, considering the proximity of the village to London, and that the next would leave in about an hour and a quarter; so that I saw Hewitt before he started. He came up to my rooms, in fact, as I was beginning breakfast.

"See here," he said, "I am sent for in the Throckham case. Have you seen the report?"

As a leader writer, I had little business with the news side of my paper, and indeed, I had no more than a vague recollection of some such heading as: "Tragedy in a barn," in one evening paper of the day before, and "Murder at Throckham" in another. So I could claim no very exact knowledge of the affair.

"Here you have a paper, I see," Hewitt said, reaching for it. "Perhaps their report is fuller than that in mine." He gave me his newspaper and began searching in mine. "No," he said presently, "much the same. News agency report to both papers, no doubt."

The report which I read ran as follows:—

SINGULAR TRAGEDY.

An extraordinary occurrence is reported from Throckham, a small village within fifteen miles of London, involving a tragic fatality that has led to a charge of murder. On Thursday evening an old barn, for some time disused, was discovered to be on fire, and it was only by extraordinary exertions on the part of the villagers that the fire was extinguished. Upon an examination of the place yesterday morning the body of Mr. Victor Peytral, a gentleman who had lived in the neighbourhood for some time, and who had been missing since shortly before the discovery of the fire, was found in the ruins. The body was burnt almost beyond recognition, but not so much as to conceal the fact that the unfortunate gentleman had not perished in the fire, but had been the victim of foul play. The throat was very deeply cut, and there can be no doubt that the murderer must have fired the barn with the object of destroying all traces of the crime. The police have arrested Mr. Percy Bowmore, a frequent visitor at the house of the deceased.

"My telegram," said Hewitt, "is plainly from a relative of this Mr. Peytral who is dead—perhaps a daughter, since she speaks of being unable to leave her mother. In that case, probably an only child, since there is no other to leave."

"Unless the others are too young," I suggested.

"Just so," Hewitt replied. "Well, Brett," he added, "to-day is Saturday."

Saturday was, of course, my "off" day, and I understood Hewitt to hint that if I pleased I might accompany him to Throckham. "Saturday it is," I said, "and I have no engagements. Would you care for me to come?"

"As you please, of course. I can guess very little of the case as yet, naturally, beyond what I have read in the paper; but the subtle sense of my experience tells me that there is all the chance of an interesting case in this. That's *your* temptation. As for myself, I don't mind admitting that—especially in these country cases, where the resources of civilisation are not always close at hand—I'm never loth to have a friend with me who isn't too proud to be made use of. That's *my* temptation!"

No persuasion was needed, and in due time we set out together.

II.

It is my experience that places are to be found within twenty miles of London far more rural, far sleepier, far less influenced by the great city that lies so near, than places thrice and four times as far away. They are just too far out to be influenced by suburban traffic, and too near to feel the influence of the great railway lines. These main lines go by, carrying their goods and their passengers to places far beyond, and it is only by awkward little branch lines, with slow and rare trains, that any part of this mid-lying belt is reached, and even then it is odds but that one must drive a good way to his destination.

Throckham was just such a place as I speak of, and that was the reason why we had such ample time to catch the first of the half-dozen leisurely trains by which one might reach the neighbourhood during the day. The station was Redfield, and Throckham was three miles beyond it.

At Redfield a coachman with a dogcart awaited Hewitt—only one gentleman having been expected, as the man explained, in offering to give either of us the reins. But Hewitt wished to talk to the coachman, and I willingly took the back seat, understanding very well that my friend would get better to work if he first had as many of the facts as possible from a calm informant before discussing them with the dead man's relations, probably confused and distracted with their natural emotions.

The coachman was a civil and intelligent fellow, and he gave Hewitt all he knew of the case with perfect clearness, as I could very well hear.

"It isn't much I can tell you, sir," he said, "beyond what I expect you know. I suppose you didn't know Mr. Peytral, my master, that's dead?"

"No. But he was a foreigner, I suppose—French, from the name."

"Well, no, sir," the coachman replied, thoughtfully; "not French exactly, I think, though sometimes he talked French to the mistress. They came from somewhere in the West Indies, I believe, an' there's a tittle of—well, of dark blood in 'em, sir, I should think; though, of course, it ain't for me to say."

"Yes—there are many such families in the French West Indies. Did you ever hear of Alexandre Dumas?"

"No, sir, can't say I did."

"Well, he was a very great Frenchman indeed, but he had as much 'dark blood' as your master had—probably more; and it came from the West Indies, too. But go on."

"Mr. Peytral, you must understand, sir, has lived here a year or two—I've only been with him nine months. He talked English always—as good as you or me; and he was always called *M^r Peytral*—not *Monsieur*, or *Signor*, or any o' them foreign titles. I think he was naturalised. Mrs. Peytral, she's an invalid—came here an invalid, I'm told. She never comes out of her bedroom—'cept on an invalid couch, which is carried. Miss Claire, she's the daughter, an' the only one, and she was hoping you'd ha' been down last night, sir, by the last train. She's in an awful state, as you may expect, sir."

"Naturally, to lose her father in such a terrible way."

"Yes, sir, but it's worse than that even, for her. You see, this Mr. Bosmore, that they've took up, he's been sort of keepin' company with Miss Claire for some time, an' there's no doubt she was very fond of him.

That makes it pretty bad for her, takin' it both ways, you see."

"Of course—terrible. But tell me how the thing happened, and why they took this Mr. Bosmore."



"But wasn't for Mrs. Peytral's being invalid, I doubt if they'd have known it was Miss at all."

"Well, sir, it ain't exactly for me to say, and, of course, I don't know the rights of it, but I've heard said as there was some little disagreement lately with Mr. Peytral and Mr. Bosmore. Some said Mr. Bosmore was only after her money, and

Mr. Peytral wanted to put the wedding off a bit, but that's only what you hear among the servants, and perhaps it's quite wrong. Anyhow, I know Mr. Peytral was getting a bit excitable lately, whatever it was. On Thursday night, just after dinner, he went strolling off in the dusk, alone, and presently Mr. Bowmore—he came down in the afternoon—went strolling off after him. It seems they went down toward the Penn's meadow barn, Mr. Peytral first, and Mr. Bowmore catching him up from behind. A man saw them—a gamekeeper. He was lyin' quiet in a little wood just the other side of Penn's meadow, an' they didn't see him as they came along together. They were quarrelling, it seems, though Grant—that's the gamekeeper—couldn't hear exactly what about; but he heard Mr. Peytral tell Mr. Bowmore to go away. He 'preferred to be alone' and he'd 'had enough' of Mr. Bowmore, from what Grant could make out. 'Get out o' my sight, sir, I tell you!' the old gentleman said at last, stamping his foot, and shaking his fist in the young gentleman's face. And then Bowmore turned and walked away."

"One moment," Hewitt interposed. "You are telling me what Grant saw and heard. How did it come to your knowledge?"

"Told me hisself, sir—told me every word yesterday. Told me twice, in fact. First thing in the morning when they found the body, and then again after he'd been to Redfield and had it took down by the police. It was because of that they arrested Mr. Bowmore, of course."

"Just so. And is this gamekeeper Grant in the same employ as yourself?"

"Oh no, sir! Mr. Peytral's is only just an acre or two of garden and a paddock. Grant's master is Colonel White, up at the Hall."

"Very good. You were saying that Mr. Peytral told Mr. Bowmore to get out of his sight, and that Mr. Bowmore walked away. What then?"

"Well, Grant saw Mr. Bowmore walk away, but it was only a feint, a dodge, you see, sir. He walked away to the corner of the little wood where Grant was, and then he took a turn into the wood and began following Mr. Peytral up, watching him from among the trees. Came close by where Grant was sitting, following up Mr. Peytral and watching him; and so Grant lost sight of 'em."

"Did Grant say what he was doing in the wood?"

"He said he'd found marks of rabbit-snares there, and he was watching to see if anybody came to set any more."

"Yes—quite an ordinary part of his duty, of course. What next?"

"Well, Grant didn't see any more. He waited a bit, and then moved off to another part of the wood, and he didn't notice anything else particular till the barn was on fire. It was dark, then, of course."

"Yes—you must tell me about the fire. Who discovered it?"

"Oh, a man going home along the lane. He ran and called some people, and they fetched the fire-engine from the village and pumped out of the horse-pond just close by. It was pretty much of a wreck by the time they got the fire out, but it wasn't all gone, as you might have expected. You see, it had been out of use for some time, sir, and there was mostly nothing but old ploughs and lumber there; and what's more, there was a deal of rain early in the week, as you may remember, sir, so the thatch was pretty sodden, being out o' repair and all—and so was the timber, for the matter o' that, for there's no telling when it was last painted. So the fire didn't go quite so fierce as it might, you see; else I should expect it had been all over before they got to work on it."

"Not at all a likely sort of place to catch fire, it would seem, either," Hewitt commented. "Old ploughs and such lumber are not very combustible."

"Quite so, sir; that's what makes 'em think it so odd, I suppose. But there was a bundle or two of old pea-straw there, shied in last summer, they say, being over bundles from the last load, and there left."

"And when was Mr. Bowmore seen next?"

"He came strolling back, sir, and told the young lady he'd left her father outside, or something of that sort, I think. And he said the barn was on fire—which he must have known pretty early, sir, for 'tis a mile from the house, off that way"; and the coachman pointed with his whip.

"Nothing was suspected of the murder, it seems, till yesterday morning?"

"No, sir. Miss Claire got frightful worried when her father didn't come home, as you would expect, and specially at him not coming home all night. But when the fire was quite put out, o' course the people

went away home to bed, and it wasn't till the morning that anybody went in to turn the place over. Then they found the body."

"Badly burnt, I believe?"

"Horrid burnt, sir. If it wasn't for Mr. Peytral's being missing, I doubt if they'd have known it was him at all. It took a doctor's examination to see clear that the throat had been cut. But cut it had been, and deep, so the doctor said. And now the body's gone over to Redfield mortuary."

Hewitt asked a few questions more, and got equally direct answers, except where the coachman had to confess ignorance. But presently we were at the house to which Hewitt had been summoned.

It was a pleasant house enough, standing alone, apart from the village, a little way back from a loop of road that skirted a patch of open green. As we came in at the front gate, I caught an instant's glimpse of a pale face at an upper window, and before we could reach the drawing-room door Miss Claire Peytral had met us.

She was a young lady of singular beauty, which the plain signs of violent grief and anxiety very little obscured. Her complexion, of a very delicate ivory tinge, was scarcely marred by the traces of sleeplessness and tears that were nevertheless clear to see. Her eyes were large and black, and her jetty hair had a slight waviness that was the only distinct sign about her of the remote blend of blood from an inferior race.

"Oh, Mr. Hewitt," she cried, "I am so glad you have come at last! I have been waiting—waiting so long! And my poor mother is beginning to suspect!"

"You have not told her, then?"

"No, it will kill her when she knows, I'm sure—kill her on the spot. I have only said that father is ill at—at Redfield. Oh, what shall I do?"

The poor girl seemed on the point of breakdown, and Hewitt spoke sharply and distinctly.

"What you must do is this," he said. "You must attend to me, and tell me all I want to know as accurately and as tersely as you can. In that case I will do whatever I can, but if you give way you will cripple me. It all depends on you, remember. This is my intimate friend, Mr. Brett, who is good enough to offer to help us. Now, first, I think I know the heads of the case, from the newspapers, and, more especially, from your coachman. But when you sent for me, no

doubt you had some definite idea or intention in your mind. What was it?"

"Oh, he is innocent, Mr. Hewitt—he is, really! The only friend I have in the world—the only friend we all have!"

"Steady—steady," Hewitt said, pressing her kindly and firmly into a seat. "You *must* keep steady, you know, if I am to do anything. I expected that would be your belief. Now tell me why you are so sure."

"Mr. Hewitt, if you knew him you wouldn't ask. He would never injure my poor father—he went out after him purely out of kindness, because I was uneasy. He would never hurt him, Mr. Hewitt, never, never! I can't say it strongly enough—he never would! Oh! my poor father, and now——"

"Steady again!" cried Hewitt, more sharply still. I could see that he feared the hysterical breakdown that might come at any moment after the lengthened suspense Miss Peytral had suffered. "Listen, now—you mustn't frighten yourself too much. If Mr. Bowmore is innocent—and you say you are so certain of it—then I've no doubt of finding a way to prove it if only you'll make your best effort to help me, and keep your wits about you. As far as I can see at present there's nothing against him that we need be afraid of if we tackle it properly, and, of course, the police make arrests of this sort by way of precaution in a case like this, on the merest hint. Come now, you say you were uneasy when your father went out after dinner on Thursday night. Why?"

"I don't know, quite, Mr. Hewitt. It was my mother that was uneasy, really, about something she never explained to me. My father had taken to going out in the evening after dinner, just in the way he did on Thursday night. I don't know why, but I think it had something to do with my mother's anxiety."

"Did he dress for dinner?"

"No, not lately. He used to dress always, but he has dropped it of late."

Hewitt paused for a moment, thoughtfully. Then he said, "Mrs. Peytral is an invalid, I know, and no doubt none the better for her anxiety. But if it could be managed I should like to ask her a few questions. What do you think?"

But this Miss Peytral was altogether against. Her mother was suffering from spinal complaint, it appeared, with very serious nervous complications, and there was

no answering for the result of the smallest excitement. She never saw strangers, and, if it could possibly be avoided, it must be avoided now.

"Very well, Miss Peytral, I will first go and look at some things I must see, and I will do without your mother's help as long as I possibly can. But now you must answer a few more questions yourself, please."

Peytral's, and it was on the return voyage that they had met Mr. Percy Bowmore. Mr. Bowmore had no friends nearer than Canada, and he was reading for the Bar—in a very desultory way, as I gathered. Miss Peytral's childhood had been passed in the West Indies, at the town of San Domingo, in fact, where her father had been a merchant. Her mother had been a helpless invalid ever



"It will tell her when she knows, I'm sure—tell her on the spot. I have only said that father is ill at—
Bedford. Oh, what shall I do?"

Hewitt's questions produced little more substantial information, it seemed to me, than he had already received. Mr. Peytral had taken the house in which we were sitting—a was called "The Lodge" simply—two years ago. Before that the family had lived in Surrey, but they had not moved direct from there; there was a journey to America between, on some business of Mr.

since Miss Peytral could remember. As to the engagement with Bowmore, it would seem to have had the full approval of both parents until quite lately. Some curious change had come over her father, she thought, a few months ago. What it was that had caused it she could not say, but he grew nervous and moody, often absent-minded, and sometimes even short-tempered and snappish,

a thing she had never known before. Also he read the daily papers with much care and eagerness. More than once or twice he had hinted that something might occur to interrupt his daughter's engagement, and again he had said that at any rate the wedding must be postponed; also he had said that his money might be needed for something even more important than a dowry. But there had been no breach with Bowmore, though both the lovers had judged it best that for a little while his visits should be somewhat less frequent.

Ten days or so ago, Mr. Peytral had returned from a short walk after dinner, very much agitated; and from that day he had made a practice of going out immediately after dinner every evening regularly, walking off across the paddock, and so away in the direction of Penn's meadow. The first visit of Percy Bowmore after this practice had begun was on Thursday, but the presence of the visitor made no difference, as Miss Peytral had expected it would. Her father rose abruptly from dinner and went off as before; and this time Mrs. Peytral, who had been brought down to dinner, displayed a singular uneasiness about him. She had experienced the same feeling, curiously enough, on other occasions, Miss Peytral remarked, when her husband had been unwell or in difficulties, even at some considerable distance. This time the feeling was so strong that she begged Bowmore to hurry after Mr. Peytral and accompany him in his walk. This the young man had done; but he returned alone after awhile, saying simply that he had lost sight of Mr. Peytral, whom he had supposed might have come home by some other way; and mentioning also that he had been told that Penn's meadow barn was on fire.

When it grew late, and Mr. Peytral failed to return, Bowmore went out again and made inquiry in all directions. It grew necessary to concoct a story to appease Mrs. Peytral, who had been taken back to her bedroom, and Bowmore had spent the whole night in fruitless search and inquiry. Then, with the morning came the terrible news of the discovery in the burnt barn, and late in the afternoon Bowmore was arrested.

The poor girl had a great struggle to restrain her feelings during the conversation, and, at its close, Hewitt had to use all his tact to keep her going. Physical exhaustion, as well as mental trouble, were against her,

and stimulus was needed. So Hewitt said "Now you must try your best, and if you will keep up as well as you have done a little longer, perhaps I may have good news for you soon. I must go at once and examine things. First, I should like to have brought to me every single pair of boots or shoes belonging to your father. Send them, and then go and look after your mother. Remember, you are helping all the time."

III.

Hewitt examined the boots and shoes with great rapidity, but with a singularly quick eye for peculiarities.

"He liked a light shoe," he said, "and he preferred to wear shoes rather than boots. There are few boots, and those not much worn, although he was living in the country. Trod square on the right foot, inward on the left, and wore the left heel more than the right. It's plain he hated nails, for these are all hand-sewn, with scarcely as much as a peg visible in the lot; and they are all laced, boots and shoes alike. Come, this is the best-worn pair; it is also a pair of the same sort the maid tells me he must have been wearing, since they are missing; low shoes, laced; we'll take them with us."

We left the house and sought our friend the coachman. He pointed out quite clearly the path by which his master had gone on his last walk; showed us the gate, still fastened, over which he had climbed to gain the adjoining meadow, and put us in the way of finding the small wood and the barn.

Both within and without the gate there was a small patch bare of grass worn by feet; and here Martin Hewitt picked up his trail at once.

"The ground has hardened since Thursday night," he said, "and so much the better—it keeps the marks for us. Do you see what is here?"

There were footmarks, certainly, but so beaten and confused that I could make nothing of them. Hewitt's practised eye, however, read them as I might have read a rather illegibly written letter.

"Here is the right foot, plain enough," he said, carefully fitting the shoe he had brought in the mark. "He alighted on that as he came over the gate. Half over it is another footmark—Bowmore's, I expect, for I can see signs of others, in both directions—going and coming. But that we shall know better presently."

He rose, and we followed the irregular track across the meadow. Like most such field-tracks, its direction was plainly indicated by the thin and beaten grass, with a bare spot here and there. Hewitt troubled to take no more than a glance at each of these spots as we passed, but that was all he needed. The meadow was bounded by a hedge, with a stile ;

of broken thorn-trig just here. See the mark ? The shoe was a little saddened in the sole by this time, and the thorn stuck.



Hewitt pointed it out with a meaning twinkle.
 "Did you never see that before in a forest house ?
 That sort of thing always leaves a strange stain under
 it, like a shadow."

and at the farther side of this stile my friend knelt again, with every sign of attention.

"A little piece of luck," he reported.
 "The left shoe has picked up a tiny piece

I hope it stuck altogether. If it did it may help us wonderfully when we get to the barn, for the trouble there will be the trampling all round of the people at the fire."

So we went on till we reached the edge of the little wood. The field-path skirted this, and here Hewitt dropped on his knees and set to work with great minuteness.

"Keep away from the track, Brett," he warned me, "or you may make it worse. The police have been here, I see, and quite recently, coming from the direction of Redfield. Here are two pairs of unmistakable police boots and another pair with them; no doubt they brought the gamekeeper along with them, to have things fully explained."

From the corner of the wood to a point forty yards along the path; back to the corner again, and then into the wood Hewitt went, carefully examining every inch of the ground as he did so. Then at last he rejoined me.

"I think the gamekeeper has told the truth," he said. "It's pretty plain, thanks to the soft ground hereabout, notwithstanding the policemen's boots. Here they came together—the thorn-twigs sticks to the shoe still, you see—and here they stopped. The marks face about, and Bowmore's steps are retraced to the corner of the wood. Peytral's turn again and go on, and Bowmore's turn into the edge of the wood and come along among the trees. You don't see them in the grassy parts quite as well as I do, I expect, but there they are. We'll keep after Peytral's prints. Bowmore's come back in the same track, I see."

The next stile led to Penn's meadow. This meadow—a large one—stretched over a rather steep hump of land, at the other side of which the barn stood. From the stile two paths could be discerned—one rising straight over the meadow in the direction of the barn, and the other skirting it to the left, parallel with the hedge.

"Here they part," Hewitt observed, musingly; "and what does that mean? Manœuvring—or what?"

He thought a moment, and then went on: "We'll leave the tracks for the present and see the barn. That is straight ahead, I take it."

When we reached the top of the rise the barn came in view, a blackened and sinister wreck. The greater part of the main structure was still standing, and even part of the thatched roof still held its place, scorched and broken. Off to the right from where we stood the village roofs were visible, giving indication of the position of the road to

Redfield. A single human figure was in sight—that of a policeman on guard before the barn.

"Now we must get rid of that excellent fellow," said Hewitt, "or he'll be offering objections to the examination I want to make. I wonder if he knows my name?"

We walked down to the barn, and Hewitt, assuming the largest possible air, addressed the policeman.

"Constable," he said, "I am here officially—here is my card. Of course you will know the name if you have had any wide experience—London experience especially. I am looking into this case on behalf of Miss Peytral—co-operating with the police, of course. Where is your inspector?"

He was a rather stupid countryman, this policeman, but he was visibly impressed—even flurried—by Hewitt's elaborate bump-tiousness. He saluted, tried to look unnaturally sagacious, and confessed that he couldn't exactly say where the inspector was, things being put about so just now. He might be in Throckham village, but more likely he was at Redfield.

"Ah!" Hewitt replied, with condescension. "Now, if he is in the village, you will oblige me, constable, by telling him that I am here. If he is not there, you will return at once. I will be responsible here till you come back. Don't be very long, now."

The man was taken by surprise, and possibly a trifle doubtful. But Hewitt was so extremely lofty and so very peremptory and official, that the inferior intelligence capitulated feebly, and presently, after another uneasy salute, the village policeman had vanished in the direction of the road. The moment he had disappeared Hewitt turned to the ruined barn. The door was gone, and the scorched and charred lumber that littered the place had a look of absolute ghostliness—perhaps chiefly the effect of my imagination in the knowledge of the ghastly tragedy that the place had witnessed. Well in from the doorway was a great scatter of light ashes—plainly the pea-straw that the coachman had spoken of. And by these ashes and partly among them, marked in some odd manner on the floor, was a horrible black shape that I shuddered to see, as Hewitt pointed it out with a moving forefinger, which he made to trace the figure of a prostrate human form.

"Did you never see that before in a burnt house?" Hewitt asked in a hushed

voice. "I have, more than once. That sort of thing always leaves a strange stain under it, like a shadow."

But business claimed Martin Hewitt, and he stepped carefully within. Scarcely had he done so, when he stood suddenly still, with a low whistle, pointing toward something lying among the dirt and ashes by the foot of that terrible shape.

"See?" he said. "Don't disturb anything, but look!"

I crept in with all the care I could command, and stooped. The place was filled with such a vast confusion of lumber and cinder and ash that at first I failed to see at all what had so startled Hewitt's attention. And even when I understood his direction, all I saw was about a dozen little wire loops, each a quarter of an inch long or less, lying among a little grey ash that clung about the ends of some of the loops in clots. Even as I looked another thing caught Hewitt's eye. Among the straw-ashes there lay some cinders of paper and card, and near them another cinder, smaller, and plainly of some other substance. Hewitt took my walking-stick, and turned this cinder over. It broke apart as he did so, and from within two or three little charred sticks escaped. Hewitt snatched one up and scrutinised it closely.

"Do you see the tin ferrule?" he said. "It has been a brush; and that was a box of colours!" He pointed to the cinder at his feet. "That being so," he went on, "that paper and card was probably a sketch-book. Brett! come outside a bit. There's something amazing here!"

We went outside, and Hewitt faced me with a curious expression that for the life of me I could not understand.

"Suppose," he said, "*that Mr. Victor Peytral is not dead after all?*"

"Not dead?" I gasped; "but—but he is! We know——"

"It seems to me," Hewitt pursued, with his eyes still fixed on mine, "that we know very little indeed of this affair, as yet. The body was unrecognisable, or very near it. You remember what the coachman said? 'If it wasn't for Mr. Peytral's being missing,' he said, 'I doubt if they'd have known it was him at all.' I think those were his exact words. More, you must remember that the body has not been seen by either of Peytral's relatives."

"But then," I protested, "if it isn't his body whose is it?"

"Ah, indeed," Hewitt responded, "whose is it? Don't you see the possibilities of the thing? There's a colour-box and a sketch-book burned. Who carried a colour-box and a sketch-book? Not Peytral, or we should have heard of it from his daughter; she made a particular point of her father's evening strolls being quite aimless, so far as her knowledge or conjecture went; she knew nothing of any sketching. And another thing—don't you see what *those* things mean?" He pointed toward the place of the little wire loops.

"Not at all."

"Man, don't you see they've been boot-buttons? When the boots shrivelled, the threads were burnt and the buttons dropped off. Boot-buttons are made of a sort of composition that burns to a grey ash, once the fire really gets hold of them, as you may try yourself, any time you please. You can see the ash still clinging to some of the shanks; and there the shanks are, lying in two groups, six and six, as they fell! Now Peytral came out in laced shoes."

"But if Peytral isn't dead, where is he?"

"Precisely," rejoined Hewitt, with the curious expression still in his eyes. "As you say, where is he? And as you said before, who is the dead man? Who is the dead man, and where is Peytral, and why has he gone? Don't you see the possibilities of the case *now?*"

Light broke upon me suddenly. I saw what Hewitt meant. Here was a possible explanation of the whole thing—Peytral's recent change of temper, his evening prowls, his driving away of Bowmore, and lastly, of his disappearance—his flight, as it now seemed probable it was. The case had taken a strange turn, and we looked at one another with meaning eyes. It might be that Hewitt, begged by the unhappy girl we had but just left to prove the innocence of her lover, would by that very act bring her father to the gallows.

"Poor girl!" Hewitt murmured, as we stood staring at one another. "Better she continued to believe him dead, as she does! Brett, there's many a good man would be disposed to fling these proofs away for the girl's sake, seeing how little there can be to hurt Bowmore. But justice must be done, though the blow fall—as it commonly

does—on innocent and guilty together. See, now, I've another idea. Stay on guard while I try."

He hurried out toward the farther side of the broad band of trampled ground which surrounded the burnt barn, and began questing to and fro, this way and that, receding farther from me as he went, and nearing the horse-pond and the road. At

"It's right enough," he cried. "I've come on his trail again! There it is, thorn-mark and all, by the roadside, and at a stile—going to Redfield—probably to the station. Come, we'll follow it up! Where's that fool of a policeman? Oh, the muddle they can make when they really try!"

"Need we wait for him?" I asked.

"Yes, better now, with those proofs lying



"Ere 'e is!" cried the speaker, regardless of the angry remonstrances of his fans. "Ere 'e is! 'E's all right! 'E's all right! 'E's all right!"

last he vanished altogether, and left me alone with the burnt barn, my thoughts, and—that dim Shape on the barn floor. It was broad day, but I felt none too happy; and I should not have been at all anxious to keep the police watch at night.

Perhaps Hewitt had been gone a quarter-of-an-hour, perhaps a little more, when I saw him again, hurrying back and beckoning to me. I went to meet him.

there; and we must tell him not to be bounced off again as I bounced him off. There he comes!"

The heavy figure of the local policeman was visible in the distance, and we shouted and beckoned to hurry him. Agility was no part of that policeman's nature, however, and beyond a sudden agitation of his head and shoulders, which we guessed to be caused by a dignified spasm of leisurely haste, we saw no apparent acceleration of his pace.

As we stood and waited we were aware of a sound of wheels from the direction of Redfield, and as the policeman neared us from the right, so the sound of wheels approached us from the left. Presently a fly hove in sight—the sort of dusty vehicle that plies at every rural railway station in this country; and as he caught sight of us in the road the driver began waving his whip at us in a very singular and excited manner. As he drew nearer still he shouted, though at first we could not distinguish his words. By this time the policeman, trotting ponderously, was within a few yards. The passenger in the fly, a thin, dark, elderly man, leaned over the side to look ahead at us, and with that the policeman pulled up with a great gasp and staggered into the ditch.

"'Ere 'e is!" cried the fly-driver, regardless of the angry remonstrances of his fare. "'Ere 'e is! 'E's all right! It ain't 'im! 'Ere 'e is!"

"Shut your mouth, you fool!" cried the angry fare. "Will you stop making a show of me?"

"Not me!" cried the eccentric cabman. "I don't want no fare, sir! I'm drivin' you 'ome for honour an' glory, an' honour an' glory I'll make it! 'Ere 'e is!"

Hewitt took in the case in a flash—the flabbergasted policeman, the excited cabman and the angry passenger. He sprang into the road and cried to the cabman, who pulled up suddenly before us.

"Mr. Victor Peytral, I believe?" said Martin Hewitt.

"Yes, sir," answered the dark gentleman snappishly, "but I don't know you!"

"There has been a deal of trouble here, Mr. Peytral, over your absence from home, as no doubt you have become aware; and I was telegraphed for by your daughter. My name is Hewitt—Martin Hewitt."

Peytral's face changed instantly. "I know your name well, Mr. Hewitt," he said. "There's a matter—but who is this?"

"My friend, Mr. Brett, who is good enough to help me to-day. If I may detain you a moment, I should like a word with you aside."

"Certainly."

Mr. Peytral alighted, and the two walked a little apart.

I saw Hewitt talking and pointing toward the burnt barn, and I well guessed what he was saying. He was giving Peytral warning of what he had discovered in the barn, telling

him that he must give the information to the police, and asking if, in those circumstances, Peytral wished to go home, or to make other arrangements. Often Hewitt's duty to his clients and his duty as a law-upholding citizen between them put him in such a delicate position.

But there was no hesitation in Mr. Victor Peytral. Plainly he feared nothing, and he was going home.

"Very well, then," I heard Hewitt say as they turned toward us, "perhaps we had better go on slowly and let my friend cut across the fields first to break the news. Brett—I knew you would be useful, sooner or later."

And so I hurried off, with the happy though delicate mission to restore both father and lover to Miss Claire Peytral.

IV.

Miss Peytral had to be put to bed under care of a nurse, for the revulsion was very great, and so was her physical prostration. Bowmore, a very pleasant young fellow, came with hurried enquiries and congratulations, and rushed off to London to cable to his friends in Canada, for fear of the effect of newspaper telegrams. And at last Hewitt and I sat with Mr. Peytral in his study. "Mr. Hewitt," said Peytral, "I am not sure how far explanations may go between us. There is more in that death in the barn than the police will ever guess."

Peytral was haggard and drawn, for, as he had let slip already, he had scarce slept an hour since leaving home on Thursday.

"I am tired," he said, "and worn out, but that is not a novelty with me; and I'm not sure but we may be of use to each other. Did my daughter tell you why she sent Mr. Bowmore after me on Thursday night?"

Hewitt explained the thing as briefly as possible, just as he had heard it from Miss Peytral.

"Ah," said Peytral, thoughtfully. "So she thought my manner became moody a few months back. It did, no doubt, for I had memories; and more, I had apprehensions. Mr. Hewitt, I think I read in the papers that you were in some way engaged in the extraordinary case of the murder of Mr. Jacob Mason?"

"That is quite correct. I was."

"There was another case, a little while before, which possibly you may not have

heard of. A man was found strangled near the York column, by Pall Mall, with just such a mark on his forehead as was found on Mr. Mason's."

"I know that case, too, as well as the other."

"Do you know the name of the murderer?"

"I think I do. We speak in confidence, of course, as client and professional man?"

"Of course. What was his name?"

"I have heard two—Everard Myatt and Catherton Hunt."

"Neither is his real name, and I doubt if anybody but himself knows it. Twenty years ago and more I knew him as Mayes. He was a Jamaican. Mr. Hewitt, that man's foul life has been justly forfeit a thousand times, but if it belongs to anybody it belongs to me!"

It was terrible to see the sudden fiery change in the old man. His lassitude was gone in a flash, his eyes blazed and his nostrils dilated.

For a little while he sat so, his mouth awork with passion; then he sank back in his chair with a sigh.

"I am getting old," he said, more quietly, "and perhaps I am not strong enough to lose my temper. . . . Well, as I said, Mayes was a Jamaican, a renegade white. Do you remember that in the black rebellion of 1865, there was a traitorous white man among the negroes? Eyre hanged a few rebels, and rightly, but the worst creature on all that island escaped—probably escaped by the aid of that very white skin that should have ensured him a greater punishment than the rest. He escaped to Hayti. Now you have probably heard something of Hayti, and of the common state of affairs there?"

"Well," Peytral pursued, "then I need not expatiate on it, and you will understand the sort of place that Mayes fled to, and how it suited him. He was a man of far greater ability than any of the coarse scoundrels in power, and he was worse than any of them. He was not such a fool as to aim at ostensible political power—that way generally led to assassination. He was the jackal, the contriver, the power behind the throne, the instigator of half the devilry set going in that unhappy place, and he profited by it with little risk; he was the confidential adviser of that horrible creature Domingue. If you know anything of Hayti you will know what that means.

"At this time I was comparatively a young man, and a merchant at Port-au-Prince. It was a bad place, of course, and business was risky enough, but, for that very reason, profits were large, and that was an attraction to a sanguine young man like myself. I did very well, and I had thoughts of getting out of it with what I had made. But it was a fatal thing to be supposed wealthy in Port-au-Prince, unless you were a villain in power, or partner with one. I was neither, and I was judged a suitable victim by Mayes. Not I alone, either—no, nor even only I and my fortune. Gentlemen, gentlemen, my poor wife, who now lies——"

Peytral's utterance failed him. He rose as if choking, and Hewitt rose to quiet him. "Never mind," he said, "sit quiet now. We understand. Rest a moment."

The old man sank back in his chair, and for a little while buried his face in his hands. Then he went on: "I needn't go into details," he said, huskily. "It is enough to say that every devilish engine of force and cunning was put in operation against me. So it came that at last, on a hint from a hanger-on of the police-office, who had enough humanity in him to remember a kindness he had experienced at my hands, that we took flight in the middle of the night—my poor wife, myself, and our three children, with nothing in the world but our bare lives and the clothes we wore. I might have tried to get aboard a foreign ship in the harbour, but I knew that would be useless. I should have been given up on whatever charge Mayes chose to present, and my wife and children with me. I had hope of somehow getting to San Cristobel, where I had a friend—over the border in the other Government of the island, the Dominican Republic. That was eighty miles away and more, across swamps, and forests and mountains. Well, we did it—we did it. We did it, Mr. Hewitt, and I dream of it still. They hunted us, sir—hunted us with dogs. We hid from them a whole day among the rank weeds—up to our shoulders in the water of a pestilential fever-swamp; Claire, the baby, on her mother's back, and both the boys on mine. They died—they died next day. My two beautiful boys, gentlemen, died in my arms, and I was too weak even to bury them!"

There was another long pause, and the man's head was bowed in his hands once more. Presently he went on again, but at first without lifting his head.

"We did it, gentlemen," he said—"we did it. We crawled into San Cristobel at the end of five days; and from that moment my dear wife has never once stood upright on her feet. So we came out of it, and the baby, Claire, was the one that suffered least. She was too young to understand, and her mother—her mother saved her, where I could not save the boys!"

He paused again, and presently sat up, pale, but in full command of himself. "You will excuse me, gentlemen, I am sure, and make allowances for my feelings," he said. "There is not a great deal more to tell. Mayes did not last long in Hayti. Domingue was overthrown, and Mayes left the island, I was told. My friend in San Cristobel—he was a cousin, in fact—put me on my legs again, and after a while he helped me to begin business at San Domingo, under my present name, Peytral, which, in fact, was my mother's maiden name. There came a sudden push in trade with the United States about this time, and I went into my affairs with the more energy to distract my thoughts. In fifteen years I had made the small competency which I have brought to England with me, with the idea of a peaceful end to my life and my wife's; though I doubt if I am to have that now. For when I went away without warning on Thursday night I was dogging Mayes!"

Hewitt nodded, with no sign of surprise. "And the man killed in the barn?"

"That is one more of his thousand crimes, without a doubt. Though it differs. Do you know what drew my attention to the murders of the men Denson and Mason, and so set me thinking? In each case the murder was by strangulation, and the medical evidence at the inquests showed that it was effected by means of a tourniquet. In fact, in the second case, the tourniquet itself was left behind."

"Yes," Hewitt replied, "I loosened it myself—but, unfortunately, I was too late."

"Well, now," Peytral went on, "in Hayti, in my time, Mayes's enemies had a habit of dying suddenly in the night, by strangulation, and a tourniquet was always the instrument. And just as murder was quite a popular procedure in that accursed place, so strangulation by tourniquet became the most common form of the crime. It was rapid, effective, and silent, you see. So that a murder by tourniquet, quite an unknown thing in this country, took my attention at once, and when

another followed it so soon, I felt something like certainty. And the triangle was suggestive, too."

"Were Mayes's victims marked in that way in Hayti?"

"No, there was no mark. But"—here Mr. Peytral's features assumed a curious expression—"there are things which are not believed in this country—which are laughed at, in fact, and called superstition. You know something of Hayti, and therefore you must have heard of Voodoo—the witchcraft and devil-worship of the West Indies. Well, Mayes was as deep in that as he was in every other species of wickedness. It sounds foolish, perhaps, here in civilised England, and you may laugh, but I tell you that Mayes could make men do as he wished, with their consent or against it! And he used a thing—it was generally known that he used a thing marked with a triangle—a Red Triangle—by the use of which he could bend men to his will!"

Hewitt was listening intently, with no sign of laughter at all, notwithstanding his client's apprehension. And I remembered the case of Mr. Jacob Mason, and how that victim had so fervently expressed his wish to the excellent clergyman, Mr. Potswood, that he had never dabbled in the strange devilries of Myatt—or Mayes, as we were now learning to call him.

"At any rate," Peytral resumed, "you will understand that the conjunction of the tourniquet with the Red Triangle in the two cases you know of caused me some excitement. My daughter, as you have said, noticed a change in my habits from that time; my wife did more—she knew the reason. Mr. Hewitt, I am an older man, but there is hotter blood in my veins than in yours. My father was English—though you might scarcely suppose it—but my mother, to whose name I have reverted, was a French Creole. So perhaps my natural instincts come nearer to those of our savage ancestry than do yours. Whether or not you will understand me I do not know, but I can tell you that even now, in cold blood—for my paroxysm has exhausted itself and me—it seems to me that it would be my duty, not to say my sacred duty, to tear that man to pieces with my hands whenever and wherever I could put them on him! My old passions may have slept, I find, but they are alive still, and I found them waking when I realised that Mayes was alive and in

England. The words 'sane' and 'insane' are elastic in their application, but I doubt if you would have called me strictly sane of late. I evolved mad schemes for the destruction of this wretch, and I was ready to devote myself and everything I possessed to the purpose. More than once I contemplated coming to you—seeing that you had met the man in one of his villainies—with the idea of enlisting your aid. But I reflected that you would probably make yourself no

I was still confounded with surprise, and as they passed behind a clump of trees, Mayes was gone, and I saw his companion alone. He was a young man—an artist, it would seem, with sketch-book and colours."

I started, and Hewitt and I glanced at each other. Peytral saw it and paused. "Never mind," said Hewitt. "Please go on."

"After that I came out every night, in the hope of seeing my enemy again. On



"That man's life has been partly forfeit a thousand times, but if it belongs to anybody it belongs to me!"

party to a plan of private revenge, and I hesitated. And then—then, a little more than a week ago, I saw the man himself! Changed, without doubt, but not half as much changed as I am myself. Nevertheless, sure as I am of him now, I hesitated then. For it was here in the meadow that you know, near the barn, and the thing seemed so likely to be illusion that I almost suspected my senses. It was dusk, and he was walking and talking with another man, a good deal younger. And presently, while

several evenings I saw the young artist waiting by the barn expectantly, but nobody joined him. I found that this young man was lodging at a cottage in the village, and I resolved not to lose sight of him.

"At last, on Thursday night, I saw Mayes again. Mr. Bowmore was here, and when I left the house he troubled me much by coming after me. I was obliged to tell him that I wished to be alone, and this not being enough, I grew angry and ordered him off. From what he

has told me it seems that he followed me still, but lost sight of me near Penn's meadow. Well, be that as it may, I saw Mayes and the young artist again. I watched from a rather awkward spot, and dusk was falling, so that I could not see all that passed; but presently I was aware that Mayes was making off by the road alone, and I followed him.

"From that moment I think I really was mad, though my madness did not drive me to attack him at once. I had a feeling of curiosity to see where he would go, and a curious cruel idea of letting him run for a little first—as a cat feels, I suppose, with a mouse. You may judge that I was not in my normal state of mind from the fact that all through yesterday, and part of to-day I never as much as thought of telegraphing home to say that I had gone to London. For it was to London I followed him. I took no ticket at the station—I got on the platform by stealth, and entered the train unobserved, for he and one boy were the only passengers, and I feared attracting attention. It was easy enough, in such a station as Redfield, and I paid at London. And after all I lost him! Lost him in London!"

"How?"

"Like a fool. I saw him enter a house, and waited. Followed him again, and waited at another. I might have flung him into the river from the Embankment, and I refrained. And then—whether it began at a dark corner or in a group of people I cannot tell, but I suddenly discovered that I was following a stranger—a stranger of about Mayes's form and stature. It was what I should have expected, and provided for, in London streets at night!

"If I have been mad, it was then I was worst. I suppose by that time it must have been too late to get back home, but I never thought of that. I ran the streets the whole night, like a fool, hunting for Mayes. I kept on all day yesterday. I waited and watched hours at the two houses he had visited; and it was not till early this morning that I flung myself on to a bed in a private hotel in Euston Road. I slept a little, and my paroxysm was over. Perhaps I am more fortunate than I am disposed to think, since I am as yet in no danger of trial for murder."

This passionate, wayward, stricken man was plainly the object of fascinated interest

to Hewitt. My friend waited a moment, and then said—"The houses he called at—I should like to know them. And where you lost sight of him."

Peytral sat back, and gazed thoughtfully for fully half-a-minute in Hewitt's face. "Do you know," he said at length, "I don't think I'll answer that question now? I'd like to leave it for a day or two. Yesterday I wouldn't have told you, even on the rack—no, not a word! I should have said 'Take your own chances, and get him if you can. As for me, I consider him *my* prey, and what scent I have picked up I shall use myself!' A mad fancy, you will think, perhaps. For me the question is, was I sanest then or now? I will take a day or two to think."

V.

In less than a day or two the identity of the victim of the burnt barn was established. For Hewitt had his idea, and he communicated with Plummer, of Scotland Yard. The man with the buttoned boots and the sketch-book was the artist who had been staying at the cottage in the village, but who, singularly enough, had never been seen to draw, and had left no drawings behind him. He had warned the people of the cottage that he might be away for a night or two, and he had stayed away for two nights before; so that his disappearance did not disturb them, and when they heard that Mr. Peytral's body had been found in the barn they accepted the news as fact. They recognised at once a photograph produced by Plummer as that of their late lodger. And the photograph had been procured from Messrs. Kingsley, Bell and Dalton, the intended victims in the bond case, and it was one of Henning, their vanished correspondence clerk!

That his death would be convenient to Mayes, the greater scoundrel, was plain enough. The bond robbery had been brought to naught, thanks to Martin Hewitt, and Henning was now useless. Worse, he might be caught, or give himself up, and was thus a perpetual danger. And probably he wanted money. This being so, it was a singular fact that at the inquest the surgeon who had examined the wound gave it as his most positive opinion that it had been self-inflicted. And it was done with a razor, Henning's own, as it was very clearly proved after inquiry. For the razor was found in the barn by the police, entangled with the blackened frame of an old lantern.

All Prizes are payable in Cash, and have already been deposited at the Bank.

First Prize £500 Cash Down.

100 Prizes of £5 each.

PROFITABLE EMPLOYMENT FOR SPARE TIME.

The London Magazine's New Skill Contest.

In response to numerous requests for a feature that will at the same time yield pleasure and profit, we have much pleasure in announcing a Skill Contest in which every reader of *THE LONDON MAGAZINE* is invited to join.

As will be seen from the figures above, a large number of those who enter must inevitably find themselves considerably the richer by so doing. There are few people so well off that the principal prize would not be regarded as a very welcome windfall. Probably no reader would find it difficult to devise his or her own means of using either of the awards. Indeed it is difficult to say what could not be done with the First Prize of £500 (five hundred pounds). It probably represents several years' income for thousands of those who read these lines. It would enable the recipient of a salary to start in business for himself or herself, and even the prosperous business man or woman would find it useful in enlarging his or her business and making it more prosperous. With a balance of £500 at the Bank the prospective landowner could see his way clear to secure a house and home of his own, while the same sum would provide a handsome dowry for any prospective bride.

Now the sums enumerated above, making in all £1,000, are lying at the Bank awaiting claimants. These will probably be recruited from among those who read these lines to-day. Why should not one fall to you? The sums are to be the rewards of ingenuity and skill, but in reality the means by which they are to be secured represent simplicity itself. This is how the prizes are to be won:—

On the following two pages appear a number of little pictures. These represent hidden names of books and authors. Below we give two examples. The task we set our readers is to discover what these names of books and authors are; and, in doing this, they are quite at liberty to consult their friends and relatives.

This is the second list. The first list appeared in the February number of *THE LONDON MAGAZINE*, copies of which can still be obtained. Another list will appear in *THE LONDON MAGAZINE* each month, and the reader who succeeds in deciphering the greatest number of these Puzzle Pictures will secure the First Prize of £500.

READ THESE RULES CAREFULLY.

Under each picture write the name of the book or author you think it represents. Leave blank any that you cannot decipher. Probably no one will succeed in solving them all. Do not send the lists singly. Keep them until the set is complete and we announce the days for sending in. Every member of a family can send a set of solutions.

The First Prize of £500 will go to the competitor who sends in the most correct set of solutions, and the competitors sending in the next two most correct sets will be awarded prizes of £5 each.

If anyone unscrupulously attempted to post solutions, etc. by, or by or using his, or her, name and address in the space appearing at the foot of the list. The person whose name appears in this space on the winner's list will receive an award of £50.

There will be attached to the final list a form to be signed by each competitor, whereby he agrees to these conditions; and no list will be considered unless this form shall have been duly signed by the competitor.

In the event of ties, the prizes will be divided; that is to say, if two competitors tie for the first place, the first and second prizes will be divided between them, and so forth.

THE LONDON MAGAZINE will not be responsible for any loss or delay in transmission or delivery of the lists by post, nor for any accidental loss of a list after delivery at the office of *THE LONDON MAGAZINE*.

AUTHOR EXAMPLE.



WALTER SCOTT.

BOOK EXAMPLE.



"THE SHADOW OF A CRIME."

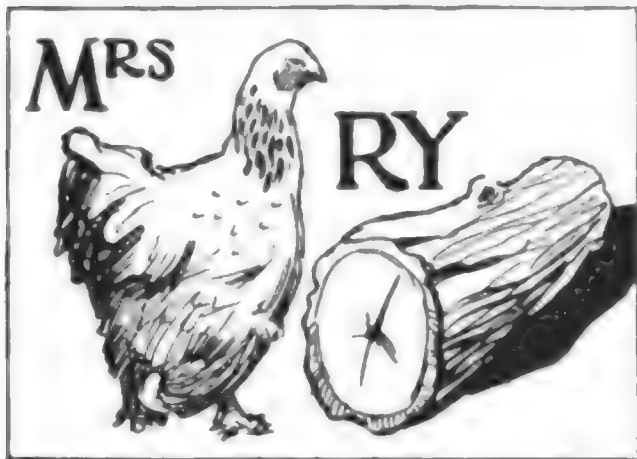
Every list must be delivered by a fixed day, which will be announced later. The Editor will then adjudge upon the lists, and announce the names of those whom he has so far adjudged to be the winners. Should any person claim to have won a prize or a better prize than that announced, he must, within seven days of the first announcement of prize-winners, forward a written claim, together with the sum of 5s., for a search and reconsideration, and a search will then be made for the list. If the same cannot be found, or if upon reconsideration the Editor does not think fit to alter his previous decision, the claim will be disallowed.

Should any such claim be allowed, the 5s. will be returned.

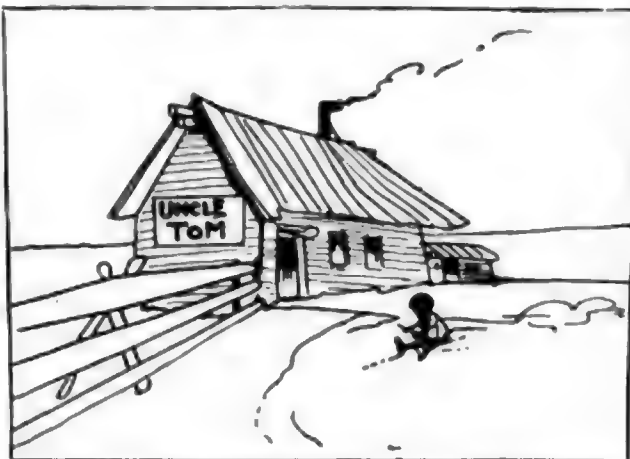
In this and in respect to every other matter connected with this competition, the Editor's decision shall be final and conclusive.

The offer is made by THE LONDON MAGAZINE alone, and the contest is not connected in any way with any other magazine or journal.

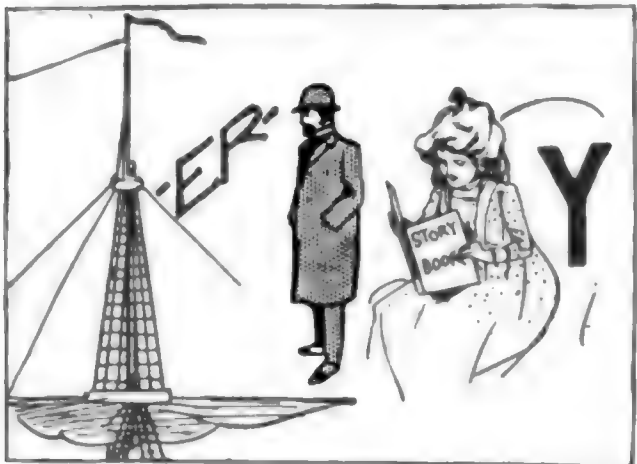
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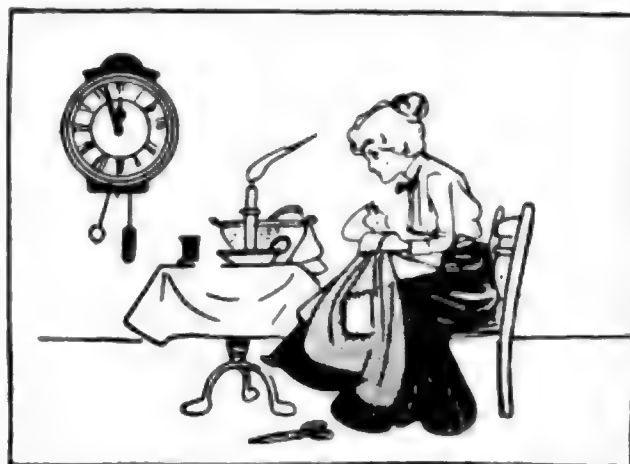
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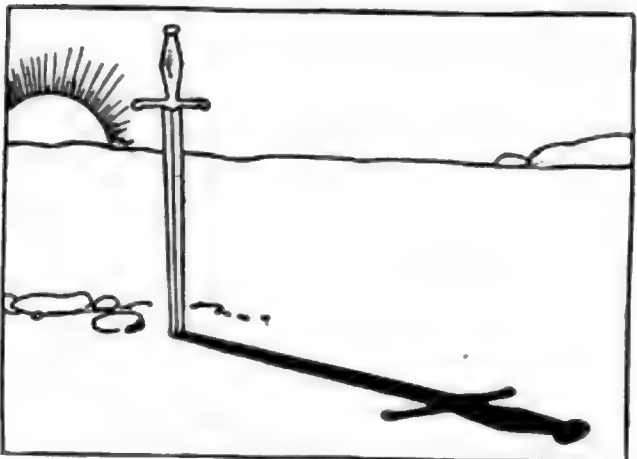
14.



15.



16.



17.



18.

Name and
Address of
Competitor

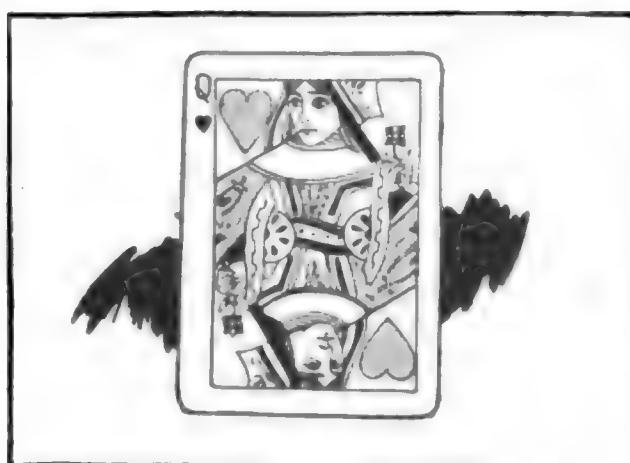
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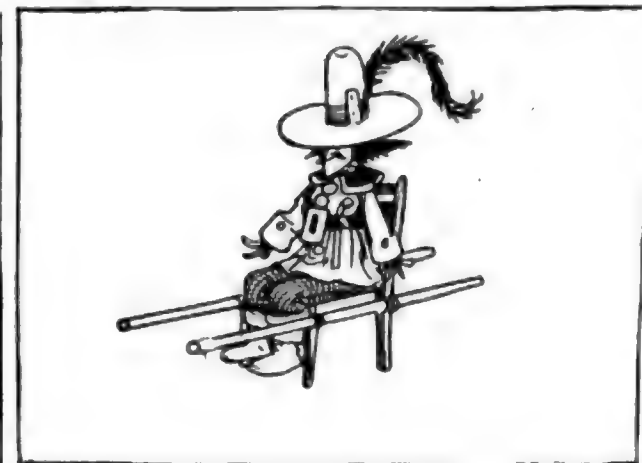
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Name and Address of the person (if any) who introduced the Competition to your notice. }

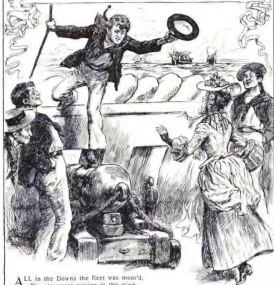
THE MOST IMPORTANT POINT TO REMEMBER :

Do not send in your lists singly. Keep them till the end of the contest, when we shall announce the closing date, and the method by which they are to be sent in.

There is one important point that Competitors in this Picture Puzzle Contest must bear in mind: No Competitor may send in more than one list; though, of course, this does not apply to the individual members of a family, each of whom may send in his or her own list of solutions.

The Editor is well aware that some of the pictures are capable of more than one correct solution. As the rules provide, all correct solutions will be accepted.

BLACK EYED SUSAN



ALL in the Downs the fleet was moor'd,
The streamers waving in the wind,
When Black-eyed Susan came on board,
"Oh, where shall I my true love find?
Tell me, my jovial sailors, tell me true,
Does my sweet William sail among your crew?"

William, who high upon the yard
Reck'd by the billows to and fro,
Soon as the well-known voice he heard,
He sigh'd and cast his eyes below;
The cord flies swiftly through his glowing hands,
And quick as lightning on the deck he stands

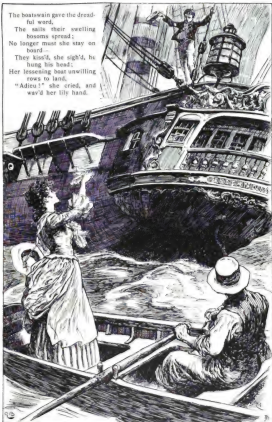


The boatswain gave the dreadful ward,

The sails their swelling bosoms spread;
No longer must she stay on board—

They kiss'd, she sigh'd, he hung his head;
Her lessening boat unwilling rows to land.

"Adieu!" she cried, and wav'd her lily hand.





Dismissing young birds. The man with the gun fires a black cartridge of his quarry. The shock is sufficiently powerful to knock the bird down without making much noise.

THE FAVOURITE METHODS OF THE DEPREDATORS UPON GAME PRESERVES, DESCRIBED BY C. LANG NEIL.

A DISTINGUISHED young medico recently expressed the opinion that the finest tonic in the world was "walking in the country." Poachers, then, deserve to be healthy, for patient trudging over road and field and coppice in the hours of darkness, when the rest of the world, gamekeepers sometimes excepted, lies snugly abed, forms the greater part of the poor-man sportsman's nightly occupation.

We say poor-man sportsman because, whilst to most respectable townsfolk the word "poacher" denotes a criminal, yet in the country there is a very large class of undoubtedly respectable citizens of the realm to whom it means a sportsman who, though not amply blessed with this world's goods, yet holds the genuine conviction that wild animals—furred or feathered—and fish are a gift of nature to the whole of mankind, and not specially and solely presented to the individual who may chance to own the particular land or water in which they burrow, nest, or swim. The poacher regards himself as a perfectly honest subject, exercising his rights despite unjust and despotic opposition.

The small farmer is his fast friend, for the poacher helps to keep down hares and game,

which would otherwise do serious damage to the farmer's crops, and for whose depredations he has not a shred of recompense.

When last the Parliament of this country appointed a Commission to inquire into the probity and practice of the game laws, it was clearly proved that men who would think nothing of clearing a coppice of fifty—yea, a hundred—brace of pheasants, or of denuding an estate of every hare upon it, would seem to steal a single chicken or any other description of property, being, poaching apart, as honest as anyone else in the district.

Poachers may be described as of two classes—those who live by it, and those who poach for sport's sake, regardless of profit.

The former is naturally the more skilled and thus regarded as the professional; the latter being looked upon as the amateur in the sport. The favourite pastime of this amateur poacher is undoubtedly coursing hares. He dearly loves a dog, and he simply revels in a chase. He cannot afford to satisfy his passion under ordinary coursing circumstances, so he and a few kindred spirits set out from their various abodes at about four

o'clock in the morning, or perhaps a trifle earlier if the *sundowners* be at any considerable distance. His dog—or a couple, on the lead—accompanies him. The two or three-hour tramp through country lanes, if it be summer, just streaked with the silver shimmering mist of dawn, seems next to nothing to him, looking forward to the promised sport. Arrived at the destination, it is not long before the friends and their dogs turn up. A pull all round at a bottle, produced from the capacious pocket of one of the party, and no further time is lost in getting to the field which they have been led to understand is nothing less than "carpeted with pussies."

The dogs are lurchers. Now, a lurcher is any cross-bred with some greyhound in it. There are differences of opinion even among the craft as to what forms the best cross. Whatever it is there must be three parts of greyhound or the hare would outpace it every time. A quarter bulldog and three-quarters greyhound, or the same proportions of German boarhound and greyhound, are perhaps the very best combinations. In the event of a skirmish with keepers, the bulldog or boarhound element has time and again stood the poacher in better stead than his own fists or cudgel.

The intelligence possessed by a well-trained lurcher is remarkable: in fact, many a poacher looks on his dog as almost human. Perhaps the least astonishing, but certainly one of the most useful, accomplishments is that it always retrieves its quarry and surrenders it to none other than its own master. The trained coursing dog will only take its hare in orthodox fashion. The

poacher's lurcher smells out and starts its own "pussy," and sometimes, sad to say, even springs upon it without allowing it time to make a run at all. Its persistence is marvellous and its strength inexhaustible.

Coursing is all very well for the sporting "pilgrim," but his professional brother, to whom a large bag is the sole satisfaction, employs dozens of ingenious methods of trapping.

A very simple, but rather risky, way of catching hares, is to stretch a net across a gateway through which the hare's run or track lies. Hares when disturbed always make straight as darts for their run and dash at full speed along it. By one poacher proceeding in a roundabout direction to the other end of the field with a dog, whilst another lies concealed near the net-spanned gateway, a couple or more hares will probably be sprung, who, having the dog behind them, come along at a great speed and rush right into the net with tremendous force, rolling themselves up in it, and thus falling easy victims. The danger lies in the fact that a couple of



A simple drop lip trap, employed to ensnare rabbits and hares.

men and a dog in a field, with a net fixed across a gateway, would stand no chance of avoiding a conviction, should Mr. Keeper ("Kipper," the illiterate members call him) opportunely turn up during the proceedings.

Yet another alternative plan for hares is to set a wire slip-noose a few inches above the ground on the line of the run. The fugitive hare's head dashes through the opening, and the impetus of its flight draws tightly the noose, bringing instantaneous strangulation. Rabbits are sometimes caught with traps not dissimilar from those set in most home larders to exterminate rats.

The *sturtman*, however, disdains mere traps, and takes his rabbits by means of ferrets sent into a burrow, having previously pegged down small nets over the most likely exit holes and filled up the others. In this case it is as well to kneel close up to the netted holes, for the terrified bunny runs out like a gust, and would often burst right through, or tear the net from its pegs, and so escape, unless a pair of ready hands support the net in its task.

The fresh, wild, north country streams have a peculiar fascination for the illicit angler. Those who are dubbed the amateurs of the craft, fish as do true sportsmen, taking only the risk of being caught angling in private waters, hence there is not much in their methods to describe.

Quite another matter are the devices of the water-poacher who wants a full basket and cares not a jot for the means of its collection. Young salmon he will secure from a beaming stream by the simple expedient of attaching a cord to a basket minus its lid. Flinging the basket into the stream he rapidly draws it ashore containing a flapping struggling load.

Spearing eels and tickling trout are accomplishments early acquired by every water-poacher. A boggy country provides muddy-bottomed water-courses, which form a favourite skidding-place of eels. They lie buried in the slimy bed, but the expert sees their traces, and thinks little of a day's work with his spear which shows less than thirty or forty wriggling trophies of his prowess.

Pheasants always find a profitable market dead or alive. To secure them alive "bagging" is the best method. The poacher first

proceeds to a field which adjoins a wood known to be well stocked. In a line parallel with the edge of the wood, and about fifteen to thirty yards distant, he makes a series of round holes by pushing his stick into the ground four or five inches and working it about until the hole is some two inches across and four or five deep. Into each hole he places a little paper bag rolled in shape similar to a grocer's sugar bag, and in the bottom of

each bag are dropped a few grains of barley. Round the top edge inside the bag he brushes a copious circle of bird-lime.

Now, pheasants have generally, in early life, been fed by hand, and though they make off when the poacher approaches, yet when he has finished bending down to arrange his little traps, and retires to the concealment of a neighbouring hedge, out run the birds expecting to find food where he lingered; nor are they disappointed, as the reader will have gathered. Pop goes a head into the first hole to secure the barley, only to be instantly withdrawn with the little paper bag securely stuck by the lime round its neck. Several of his friends, undeterred by his experience, make a peck each into the holes only to meet the same fate. Struggling,

shaking, kicking and scratching, half-a-dozen or so of paper-hooded (hence blinded) pheasants only need picking up and slipping into the poacher's pockets or sack. Even if they manage to extricate their heads by scratching the bags off, the lime is robbed into their eyes, leaving them precisely as sightless as if the bag held fast.

Intoxicating pheasants is another ruse. A quantity of barley is soaked in a vessel full of



A poacher concealed in a tree, armed with a heavy iron rod, ready to stun a deer passing beneath.



Dragging a field with a net to catch roosting partridges.

water, and the water is presently strained off. Whisky or rum is now poured over the grain, which absorbs the alcohol and ejects the water. A handful of this barley is scattered close up to the hedge or fence of the wood where are the pheasants, and a thin trail of it is laid along the ground for from twenty to forty yards towards the spot where the poachers remain concealed behind a clump of bushes or such other cover as may be convenient. The trail is terminated by

the rest of the soaked barley piled up into a little heap. Considerable patience must on occasion be exercised before the birds discover the bait. Once one of them finds it he soon calls a mate, and before many moments a flock of eager, pecking birds

are racing along the trail. By the time they reach the final heap they are screaming and fighting indiscriminately, and at length, one after another falls, either disabled by the combat or intoxicated, or both. The poachers

run out and wring the necks of all they can seize, which may be any number from three to a dozen. The men retire to cover, and before long another party of pheasants are in hot encounter round the attractive little heap, to be in due course captured and dropped into the *sportsman's* (?) bag.

Plovers, partridges and seagulls likewise fall ready victims of the "drink curse" in its above form.

Smoking pheasants is another profitable

ruse. The pheasant, unlike the partridge which always roosts on the ground, chooses the bough of a tree as a sleeping place, and as a rule, two or more make use of the same bough. Hence, when he has discovered it (not a very easy task in



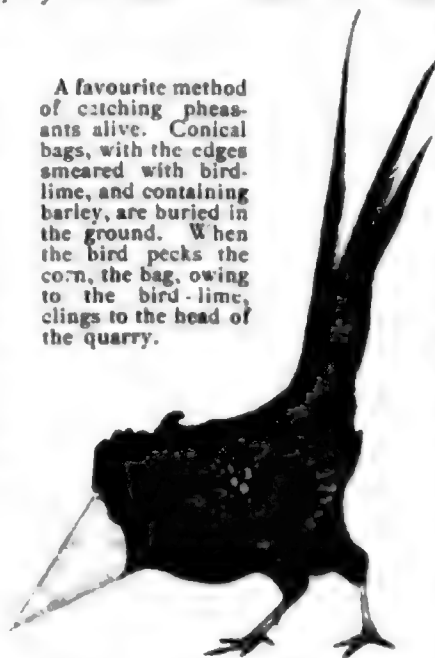
The result of the ruse. The bird is entangled in the meshes of the net.

the dark, without disturbing its occupants) the poacher lights a tiny fire of leaves and casts upon it a handful of sulphur with the result that before many moments have passed down drops suffocated pheasant number one with a

whirr and a dead thud as it reaches the ground, to be followed, an instant later, by its mate.

But this is dangerous since the fire gives light, and a wakeful gamekeeper may be upon the prowl. An ingenious contrivance is described in an interesting book called *Confessions of a Poacher*, wherein it is stated that one gang invented and carried about with them a sort of closed stove with a long telescopic iron tube chimney so that the smoke was directed point blank on to each rooster from the mouth of the chimney, whilst the stove was so arranged as to show no light. Its manipulation required three men, two to carry and one to steady it. It did its work very well, however.

A favourite method of catching pheasants alive. Conical bags, with the edges smeared with bird-lime, and containing barley, are buried in the ground. When the bird pecks the corn, the bag, owing to the bird-lime, clings to the head of the quarry.



These balls of fat contain springs to choke unsuspecting birds.

When partridges are the birds desired, a drag-net is the best means of taking them. The partridge roosts on the ground, and a kindly Providence seems to have deliberately arranged matters with an eye to assisting the illicit trapper of game, for they roost in coveys and are fairly sound sleepers.

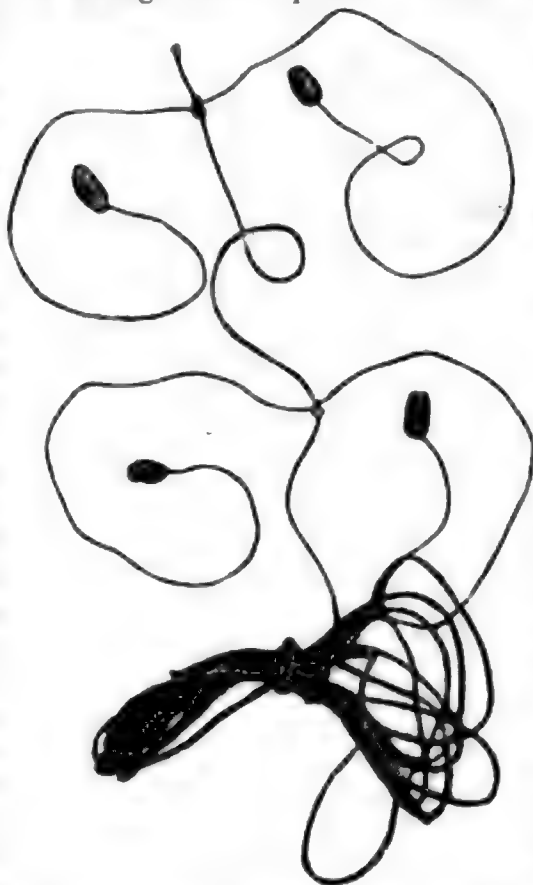
A pair of poachers, one grasping either of the two ends, drag a long net across the fields where the partridges are likely to roost. The net, which is weighted along the lower side, is when extended to its full length often as much as forty feet. So soon as the covey is reached, the poachers become aware of the fact by one or two birds waking and endeavouring to get away. The net is immediately dropped, and it frequently happens that the greater part of the covey is entrapped. The poachers promptly fall upon

their knees and wring the necks of their catch as fast as the darkness allows of securing the fluttering, screaming, feathered party, previous to departing to drag another field and augment the weight and value of the bag. The landowner is well aware of this method of dealing with his property, and nearly all the fields on an estate where partridges are reared may be seen to be dotted here and there with low bushes. The stubble fields, too, have bushes specially planted in them directly the crops are harvested. In this way the poacher sustains many a reverse, for in the darkness he drags his net over one of

these obstacles, which results in entanglement and tears, generally rendering further work impossible for that night, and inevitably wasting considerable time. The poacher, however, who is an artist, is not to be hampered by trifles, and he avoids these bushes. A pointer or setter accompanies the midnight party. From the dog's collar is suspended

a small bull's-eye lantern, showing only a tiny light in front and at each side. One man takes charge of the dog, two others have each an end of the net and keep a few yards to one side, abreast of the dog. Directly the light "points," it is clear that the birds are not far in front of the dog. The net carriers hastily run a few yards ahead and face round towards the animal. Dropping the weighted side of the net, they hold the ends at shoulder height and draw the net quickly along until, reaching the lantern, they drop it down on to the ground, netting the dog as well. Should the birds be disturbed before the dog is reached, the net is cast at once and as many birds taken as possible.

The Forest of Dean, in the West Country, was a



Unsportsmanlike roaching. Line baited with the round balls of fat shown in the photograph above. When the bird swallows the bait, the spring opens and chokes it.

grand poacher's preserve until some years back it ceased to be a Government deer forest.

From its glades many a handsome pair of horns and fat branches of red deer found their way into Bristol towns in unorthodox fashion. Keen of sight and scent, the deer are no easy prey. The favourite and perhaps safest method of deer-poaching is this. The poacher, or a couple of them, for a deer takes considerable carrying after you have captured it, first find a recent track. This they follow up, exercising ceaseless caution in keeping to "leeward," as the sailors say, lest the slightest breath of a scent of them should reach the quarry. Presently they light upon a giant tree whose branches at no too great height overhang the path. Here a dainty morsel of food is tossed right on to the deer's way, directly beneath a bough. The hunters climb the tree and one of them lies flat along that bough, grasping in his hands a heavy bar of metal.

Perhaps two or three hours of dead silent waiting wearily pass when suddenly something is heard in the distance leisurely approaching. In a couple of minutes a splendid animal is browsing below the branch. The critical moment has arrived. The iron bar falls with a terrible crash, striking and stunning the noble quarry. Quick as thought, down slips the man, and, seizing the implement, with a couple of powerful strokes breaks the poor creature's neck.

No shot has sounded, and not one drop of blood has been shed which might leave a trace of the poacher having been at work. No time is wasted in carrying the prize to the cottage home, or in the skinning, cutting up and dressing, with



Smoking pheasants by lighting a small sulphur fire beneath a tree, upon the boughs of which the birds are roosting. The fumes from the brimstone cause the pheasants to drop to the ground in a suffocated condition, when they are quietly seized and killed.

all the skill of a butcher, of the carcass. In an hour or so nothing remains but to dispose of the plunder.

A neighbour who is one of the gang provides a cart, and the meat is put aboard the *Lively Polly* packed in boxes hidden by an upper layer of coal, to find, a few hours later, a ready market in Bristol.

In the forepoising, the more humane methods



A net stretched across a gateway to ensnare hares.

adopted by poachers in pursuit of their perilous and at the same time nefarious calling have been described, but some poachers resort to more cruel and despicable practices to secure their quarry, though it must be admitted, in fairness to

poachers as a class, that they are the methods of only the more unscrupulous of those who wage war upon the game preserves of

the wealthy, and are, as a matter of fact, deprecated by the more legitimate poachers.



Another method of snaring hares and rabbits. A wire snare is placed in the centre of the quarry's run. The frightened animal rushes towards its burrow, dashes into the snare, and is instantly strangled.

Fishing with line, hook and bait, for instance, is not, as might be supposed, confined to catching the inhabitants of rivers, brooks and lakes, but is also occasionally adopted by the poacher to secure the fowls of the air.

Through a hedge he will lay lines, perhaps twenty in number; at the end of each is a tiny baited hook. At the other side of the hedge the poacher will lie low, ready to draw through any line which has a bite. Pheasants, partridges, and almost any kind of game will fall victims to this sort of fishing.

Wild ducks may be caught in like fashion. A long line is stretched across a field, having numerous short side lines, each terminating in eel hooks baited with dough. Corn is sparingly sprinkled along the length of the line. The flock settles, demolishes the corn, and finally the fatal dough-baits are swallowed.

The photographs illustrating this article show members of the fraternity actually at work, but to prevent identification the faces have, in some instances, been obliterated.

It may be pointed out, however, although hardly within the purview of this article, that fishing for birds, as narrated above, although it is justly regarded as cruel and unsportsmanlike, yet when employed in connection with hunting the albatross is considered in quite a different light. Why, it is difficult to understand, but the fact remains that albatross fishing is described by those who indulge therein as a splendid sport.

A modification of the above methods, which is resorted to in frosty weather, and which is probably still more cruel, is to bait the ends of the lines with little discs of fat, containing a small powerful spring. When the bird swallows the bait, the fat of course melts, and releases the spring, which sticks in the bird's gullet and quickly chokes it, or at any rate sufficiently incapacitates the bird to enable the poacher to seize and dispatch it readily. One reason why this inhuman method is practised is that owing to the bird's throat being choked by the spring, the bird cannot give vent to any cries to warn a



Forming for a rabbit. A net is placed over the burrow to catch the animal when it dashes out.

gamekeeper that may be on the look-out for the poacher's depredations.

STORIES OF FORGED STAMPS.

INSTANCES IN WHICH COUNTRIES AND KINGDOMS HAVE BEEN "INVENTED"
IN ORDER TO ENTRAP PHILATELISTS.

MUCH has been written about stamps and their value, yet little information has been given to the philatelist upon the subject of forgery, albeit the forger has worked so many years with such persistency that there are not many very large collections in which examples of his skill do not exist. Stamps were forged, "faked" and beguiled—to coin a word—when the present philatelic craze was in its infancy.



An ingenious stamp of an imaginary country, the invention of which was to deceive the collector, by confounding this stamp with those of the Malay States Governments.

Nothing is sacred to the forger, and he roams at large through the world of stamps, varying

the monotony of counterfeiting a British Guiana worth £500, by producing an example of his imitative ability in the shape of an Angola 10-reis, valued at 2d. or 3d.

In the early days these stamps were rude prints—like many of the originals—rough impressions from bad type and equally bad ink and paper, which, owing to absence of knowledge, easily passed muster, but when collectors increased, became more expert and enthusiastic, and were ready to pay well for rare specimens, he brought in photography and lithography to aid him, until finally his forgeries became veritable works of art produced by steel-plate engraving. Then came the "fakes," a very deadly enemy of the collector, who by means of chemicals and dyes has turned an 1841 English 2d. blue, worth 10s., into an 1854 selling readily for £15, whilst he has manipulated a Cape of Good Hope 2d. red into a much-prized "wood block error," valued at, say, £60.

The *Mé* woe of the philatelic world is undoubtedly the bogus stamp maker, who has netted many thousands by his swindles. There are several notable instances where he has imposed upon most expert dealers by inventing a country, impersonating a king, appointing a prime minister and establishing a whole postal system with a set of beautiful stamps, which he has foisted upon Europe. To do this he has pressed into service the columns of the newspapers, and a nicely-worded paragraph has often paved the way to a big haul.



The stamp of the clever impostor King Marie I. of Sedang, the sale of which realized several hundred pounds before the fraud was discovered.

Some few years ago both the *Matin* and the *Petit Journal* announced that the "Gay City" would soon be visited by an Eastern potentate, His Majesty Marie I. of Sedang, an island a few hundred miles off the coast of China, who would be sure to find a welcome from all true Frenchmen owing to the fact that His Majesty had asserted his independence in the teeth of perfidious Albion.

In due time His Majesty, wearing plenty of jewels, with his ministers and a retinue of gorgeously-attired black servants, arrived at a famous hotel, where he lived in regal magnificence, and Paris found a new sensation in watching his daily drive along the Bois de Boulogne. A few days later some letters arrived bearing a curiously-shaped and prettily-designed stamp, on which appeared the words "Sedang"—"two moons," as well as some French Colonial stamps. Parisian philatelists gave huge bribes to the hotel servants for any



A Persian 10-franc stamp, only worth eightpence, but which is sometimes forged, despite its small value. The above specimen is an excellent Continental forgery.

Sedang stamps that came their way, and so rapidly did these rise in value that they soon changed hands at 1,000 francs. This fact, too, was recorded in the newspapers, but when orders were coming from all parts of France and everything appeared propitious, a very prominent Paris stamp dealer received a command to wait on His Majesty, but after being received with great ceremony, the King directed one of his ministers to complete the contemplated business. The dealer was told that in consideration of the payment of a large sum

down he would be appointed sole agent for the stamps, and to this he readily agreed. The minister then whispered that for a few thousand louis he could buy up a fine collection the minister had brought with him unbeknown to the King, but the utmost secrecy would have to be observed, because if His Majesty heard of it he (the minister) would lose his head. A large sum of money found its way into the coffers of the bogus Marie I. and his ministers, and Europe was then flooded with the stamps. It was not, however, until a schoolboy wrote to a newspaper asking where Sedang was situated that the imposition was discovered which set all Paris laughing.



A forgery of the rare Russian Russian issue of 1851, the genuine specimen of which is worth from £1,000 to £1,200.

Towards the end of 1900 a very pretty story found its way into the philatelists' journals, and later into the newspapers. Poor little Finland, smarting, we were told, under the iron heel of Russia, had at last discovered that she still possessed the right to issue stamps, and, let the risk be what it may, she meant to do it. The stamp would be indicative of the feeling still harboured in the heart of the true Finn, viz., a lamentation that he was still governed by the hated Cossack and the cruel Czar. Quite a sensation was caused in the philatelic world, and continental dealers endeavoured to effect a "corner" in the stamp. In due time it appeared, an inch square with the arms of Finland printed on a dead black ground and with the word "Suomi" printed in white, which in Finnish means Finland.

Collectors eagerly bought it, blissfully unconscious of the fact that the actual Finnish postage stamp had been long since suppressed and an issue of Russian design substituted. The story and the stamp, like so many of its kind, came from the Continent; it was utterly bogus, and no one was more surprised at its issue than the Finns themselves.

What bid fair, some six or seven years ago, to be a nicely worked plot to defraud the collector, was by some unpropitious circumstances made to miss fire. The whole of the leading dealers, both in England and abroad, received a set of very pretty pictorial stamps, perforated and gummed, and having every appearance of being a proper and genuine issue. They bore the words "Clipperton Island Postage," but where Clipperton is, is a secret known only to the inventive mind of the man who made the stamp. Some hundreds of pounds must have been spent upon perfecting this issue, but nothing further was heard of it or its promoters.

To assist the fortunes of Don Carlos, the Carlist Pretender issued a most perfect set of stamps with the Pretender's head in profile, and they were sold to the insurgent army and used for postal purposes. They were also purchased in vast quantities by the adherents and sympathisers of Don Carlos, and many a

straggler, wounded and starving, found food and succour by disposing of these stamps. From the Pretender's point of view, the issue was legitimate, and unused specimens are rare and of value, although not recognised by the International Postal Union. This applies equally to the stamps issued by the Philippine Island insurgents, and in our own case by the various parties of Boers, who, whilst on commando, exchanged Cape stamps or manufactured some of their own.

Forgeries come mainly from the Continent and Japan. Few are of home manufacture, still, when an Englishman makes an attempt to counterfeit a stamp, he turns out a very good specimen. The finest



A clever imitation of the obsolete triangular Cape of Good Hope stamps, the forgery of which is very extensive.



The finest forgery ever placed on the London market, the work of an Englishman, who was convicted at the Old Bailey.



In forging this rare Spanish 12-cent issue, with the (forged) head, the forger skilfully cut out the head of one stamp and inserted it in the border of another.

example of an English forgery is to be found in the 1851 Caylon eightpence and the one-shilling-and-ninepence stamps. These are remarkably fine forgeries, being steel-plate engravings, and, but for a slight carelessness in the etching on the neck, would deceive an expert. There are many thousands in existence, and they formed the subject of a trial at the Old Bailey, when the forger was convicted. They were produced in London in great numbers and realised a large sum of money.



A forged 1851 Caylon eightpence stamp, which more than the original. Hundreds of these forgeries were produced, and passed through the post before the fraud was detected.

Sandwich Island stamps are very rare indeed, and the 1851 issue has always had a great attraction for the forger; the two-cent Hawaii, 1851, one of the first three rarities, and looked upon as the Koh-i-noor of the philatelic world, being worth anything between £1,000 to £1,200, has also been forged, despite the fact that only five stamps are known to exist. In one of the lesser valued Hawaii specimens the forger made just a little mistake which led to his undoing — he forgot to properly shade a feature.

There is a popular fallacy amongst philatelists that all the triangular Cape of Good Hope are extremely rare and valuable, and worth between £70 and £80, whereas save for the 1861 error, few are worth a pound, whilst a great number are only worth a shilling. This did not prevent the forger from setting to work, and the specimen here reproduced is really a splendid lithographic production. Plenty of these forgeries are to be found on the market.

A forgery worth more than the original stamp will sound strange to those unacquainted with the mysteries of philately and the vagaries of prices. It is an 1858 two-grano Naples, and is a

contemporaneous forgery with the genuine issue, and made to defraud the Neapolitan Government. The forged stamp passed through the hands of the postal officials by thousands undetected for a great many years, and was until quite recently looked upon as a genuine stamp. It is a greater rarity than the official issue, and is considered of greater value.

It would be difficult to find an old collection that has not a Pacific Steam Navigation issue of 1858, yet in nine cases out of ten this stamp is a forgery; but a more dangerous forgery is to be found in the 1859 Tuscany one-lire. This is a very clever counterfeiter, because not only has the forger succeeded in imitating the stamp, but he has provided it with a most perfect "water-mark." This is a notable example of a lithographed stamp, and well calculated to defy detection.

Most of the non-Continental forgeries have had for their object the defrauding of the Government and not collectors. Some thousands of pounds worth of the Indian one-rupee evaded the vigilance of the Indian officials, but the most daring of all forgeries was that discovered quite recently by a lynx-eyed dealer, and the discovery came as a bomb-shell to collectors. The forgery is that of the one-shilling English green, 1870. For a number of years immense quantities of these



A remarkable imitation of the Tuscany one-lire stamp. In this forgery the water-mark was also produced, and defied detection for some time.



A bogus stamp of a minor character. It is said that a small island in the Pacific was purchased and renamed to perpetuate this ruse.



A forger engraving a stamp upon a steel plate.

forgeries were passed by the authorities—in fact, the Government officials had not the slightest suspicion until a short time ago, when it was pointed out to them. Although thirty years had elapsed since the issue of the stamp, some

of the cleverest detectives in London endeavoured to unravel the mystery and run the forger to earth. There must be nearly

as many forgeries of this stamp in existence as of the Government issue.

The stamp "faker" is more deadly than a dozen forgers, and generally more successful. The Government of the island of St. Vincent in 1881 ran out of fourpenny stamps, supplying the deficiency by "surcharging" some of their shilling with the necessary "4d." The want being temporary, only six hundred shilling stamps were turned into fourpenny, consequently, in the eyes of the philatelist, this six hundred became valuable, being worth now £10 each. The St. Vincent shilling is not worth more than eight shillings, but when the "faker" has dexterously printed "4d." on the face, he finds no difficulty in palming it off.

Sometimes he burns his fingers. One thought he could swindle a dealer by selling him a stamp for £5, but in the preparation of his "fake" he ruined a stamp far more valuable. He had an unused New Zealand stamp, but was ignorant of the fact that it was worth £40, and upon learning that a different colour of the same issue was worth £5 he proceeded to alter the colour of the paper, not only ruining his £40 stamp, but failing



A bogus stamp of a hegen head with 'CONTINENT' written below it.

to swindle the dealer.

The greatest "fakers" are the Japanese, and there are shops in London where whole sheets of their forgeries may be obtained.

A favourite stamp with the "faker" is the English 2d. blue, unperforated and dated 1841. Unused, this stamp is worth about 10s., but the "faker" manipulates it so as to produce a serrated edge or perforation, which makes it appear a stamp of 1854 with fourteen perforation holes, and worth about £15.

Early Australians are rare and costly and therefore attractive to the "faker." In the 2d. diadem, there are errors which make it valuable. It is known by the water-mark, some specimens having a "2", others "5," whilst a great rarity is water-marked "8," the latter being worth £40. Finding the watermarks unevenly

printed, a young Japanese carefully selected stamps where the figure "2" was divided between two, and he contrived to turn the "2" into an "8." He spent a week on each stamp, but was amply rewarded, his specimens selling for £35 apiece.

The Spanish 1865 12-cuartos is a rare stamp, and the "errors" are rare and valuable because the head in the center is reversed. When perforated they are worth £17, and have been good game for the "faker." One took a good stamp and proceeded to grind away the head in the center until nothing was left but a piece of paper at the back as thin as a spider's web. Cutting out the head of another stamp, he ground that down until it fitted the first stamp, and when completed it was only with the most powerful magnifying glass that the "fake" could be detected.

Very pretty was the Guatemala bogus stamp, reproduced on the previous page. It was a clever piece of work, and its exquisite manufacture excited so much attention that it is said that a small island in the Pacific was purchased and renamed in order to perpetuate the swindle.



A clever forgery of the rare Pacific Steam Navigation issue of 1858.

Another bold attempt to delude philatelists, similar in character to the celebrated case of the rare Pacific Steam Navigation issue of 1858, was made on the Continent. This time a local steamship company of Porto Rico was pressed into service. It was shortly discovered, however, that both this steamship company and its stamp had its origin in the imaginative brain of an ingenious stamp "faker."

We have already mentioned the clever forgery of the Tuscany one-line stamp of the 1859 issue. Almost identical was the forgery of the four-cent Swiss stamp of 1849. The genuine stamp is worth from £14 to £15, and this high price tempted a forger to try his luck to deceive collectors, and he achieved no small success, for he copied the watermark so cleverly that it was some time before the imposition was detected.



A Spitzbergen stamp, unperforated, with a bold and clever "fake." Unfortunately this country has no post office, so that the stamp was a fraud.



The famous Finland stamp issued in 1866. The object of this issue, it was said, was to assist that Finland, although annexed by Russia, still had the right to issue money. Both the stamp and the story originated on the Continent.

WAS SHE WORTH IT?

DRAMATIC NEW NOVEL BY THE AUTHORS OF 'CONVICT 99,'
'THE STORY OF A GREAT SIN,' etc.

This story, which will be of the same length as the ordinary novel, commenced in the February number, and will be completed in the April issue.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS IN THIS STORY.

MARCUS SOMERTON	- - -	A City Banker.
MRS. SOMERTON	- - -	His Wife.
RAY SOMERTON	- - -	His Daughter.
LIEUTENANT FRANK SOMERTON	-	His Son.
HUMPHREY BOYNE	-	Millionaire, head of the firm of Boyne and Company, financiers.
LORD DARTFORD	-	A popular Peer, and brother to Humphrey Boyne.

PROLOGUE.

Lord Dartford is a generally popular peer, whose only vice is gambling, by which ultimately he is ruined. In despair he seeks his brother, Humphrey Boyne, a millionaire, to obtain money to tide him over his difficulties. Humphrey Boyne has little love for his brother, on account of his having succeeded to the title, and partly because he is in love with Ray Somerton, whom he (Humphrey Boyne) hopes to make his wife. To achieve both these ambitions, however, Humphrey Boyne makes a bargain with his brother, the terms of which are that Humphrey Boyne shall pay Lord Dartford £250,000, the latter agreeing to commit suicide at the end of twelve months, which will ensure Boyne succeeding to the title as next-of-kin. Dartford accepts these terms, but later, learning that his brother boasts that he has bought Ray Somerton (by means of financial help to her father), suggests to her a clandestine marriage, to which Ray, to escape the importunities of Humphrey Boyne, consents, and the wedding is arranged to take place secretly in three days' time.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MESSAGE FROM THE WOMAN.

"ONLY one more year of life!"

To Gerald, Lord Dartford, the words seemed to lurk everywhere. Yes, even in the ring of his wedding bells.

They had haunted him constantly since the moment when Ray Somerton had yielded to his entreaty that she should marry him at once and secretly. They had seemed to echo in the air about him, even this very morning as he prepared for the hasty, secret marriage. He had felt angry with himself because he could not shut his ears to that persistent and torturing reminder.

At last, however, he had succeeded in silencing it. He had told himself that, at whatever cost, he must save the girl who loved him and whom he adored from sacrificing herself to his brother to buy help for her father. Come what might in the future, he could not have her heart break or see her handed over to a man for whom she felt no love, but rather a distaste which made the bare idea of marriage with him appear horrible to her.

The wedding day had come and the wedding hour. The day had dawned brightly for him in the little Suffolk village where he waited to make her his wife. It was a pleasant, straggling village not very far from Beccles, and pretty even when the trees were leafless and the winter or early spring winds blew keenly through the lanes and across the bare, brown fields. Here the Marchioness of Orr had a charming country house and farm, which she occasionally visited when she was in the mood for real retirement; and it was

to this delightful country place that she had brought down to-day the bride-elect, Ray Somerton, to be married.

The distance from London was not great, and by starting from town early—necessarily early, since Ray had to escape from her home while her father was taking his morning ride and before her mother had risen—Lady Orr and the bride-elect had been able to reach the former's country-place in time to change their travelling dresses for clothes more suited to the joyous occasion. They had arrived at the station nearest their destination at about midday, and Dartford had met them with a carriage hired for the purpose. The Marchioness came down too rarely to keep one of her own carriages permanently in her stables here, for her social set called the place a benighted hole, and she privately shared their opinion on this point.

It was just because the village had some claim to be called a benighted hole that she and her friend, Lord Dartford, found it extremely convenient for their purpose at the present time. The handsome young peer whom for years she had spoiled and petted had not confided to her his true reasons for requiring that his marriage should take place privately and should be kept a dead secret; but just because he was handsome and charming and because she had always liked him, she had shown herself not only willing but eager to do everything that it was in her power to do to help him and the girl who was to be his wife. And so, faithfully keeping her promise, she had brought Ray Somerton down to him to-day.

In spite of the fact that, for secrecy's sake, the wedding was to be so very quiet, Dartford had insisted that Ray should wear bridal dress. Now, therefore, she advanced towards him up the aisle of the little country church in a gown of soft white satin which the Marchioness had chosen for her. Clusters of natural orange blossoms, such as this village had never seen before, looped the white satin here and there and crowned her head where her lace veil was fastened above her copper-coloured hair; and beneath that sheltering veil her cheeks were at some moments pale and at other moments crimson.

"I am afraid she will attract an almost dangerous amount of attention if you insist on her being married in white and wearing orange flowers," Lady Orr had said to Dartford after her arrival from town, while the three had been driving from the railway station to her house.

And she had been right. Ray Somerton, in her bridal dress, did attract a very considerable amount of attention; and it was only the loneliness of the out-of-the-world little village and the absence of newspaper men or women in it which prevented the elegant little affair from getting written about in paragraphs

which might have aroused suspicion as to the identity of the parties, and especially of the bridegroom. As it was, he was carefully hiding the fact that he was a peer, and was getting married as Mr. Boyne Dartford. The bride's declaration of her true name mattered little. The surname of "Somerton," so well known in London, meant nothing down here.

The curate of the parish performed the marriage ceremony; a weak-faced, short-sighted young fellow who took no interest in the handsome, refined-looking man and the beautiful woman whom he was joining together for life. He was not likely to talk too much about them, and so bring their union to the knowledge of the world.

"Until death us do part."

The words startled Dartford, even as he himself pronounced them. Till death should them part? God help them! That would be in a little less than a year's time from now.

God help the unhappy bride who did not know this! The truthful, unsuspecting girl whom he had cheated in not telling her of this destined limit to their love.

He stole a glance at her radiant face through the screening lace of her veil. How happy she looked, in spite of her trembling, and in spite of the sorrow which he knew she felt at having forsaken her father and mother without leaving a clue behind her. Ah! she thought, of course, that they had a long wedded life in front of them. She had no presentiment, no faintest foreshadowing of the awful truth, no mysterious spirit message flashed from his soul to hers, warning her that in one short year's time they would be parted by death—and by death in the terrible shape of suicide.

The hint of sorrow for the home and the life that she had left behind her, and the quiver of shy, trembling fear of the new life upon which she was entering had alike passed from her face when she walked down the aisle between the ranks of staring country folk, on the arm of the man who was now her husband. They had signed their names in the vestry, and now they were going forth to live in the new world of love upon which they had entered. And the face of her who, a little while before, had come into this church as Ray Somerton and who was now leaving it as Ray Boyne, Viscountess Dartford, was bright with assured happiness and new and radiant hope. It was so bright that, as she lifted it towards him in the full daylight, when they issued from the shadow of the church porch, its glowing fairness made Dartford forget for a few brief moments the sword of threatening destiny that was suspended above his head.

"Oh, Gerald, I am so happy now!" she whispered to him.

But the bridegroom's forgetfulness of the doom which threatened him was not fated to



"I did not know! Why didn't you tell me before? It would have been kinder to have told me."

last more than a few moments. For, as he and his bride were walking a few steps along the path leading from the church door to the gate, between the groups of simple country people that lined the way, a telegraph boy appeared, advanced to the bridegroom, and handed him a brick-red missive.

"A telegram of congratulation, of course," Lady Orr, who was following the newly-wedded pair, said to herself.

The crowd of villagers had hardly noticed the little incident, for the bride, in her white satin and lace and with her wonderful sprays of natural orange-blossom, was so resplendent to their unaccustomed eyes that they looked only at her, giving scant attention even to the handsome bridegroom, with his distinguished bearing and with his white hot-house rose as a festive token in his buttonhole. For this reason they did not notice the curious effect produced upon him by the message which he had just received. They did not observe that he had grown paler and that his hand shook a little as it held the telegram.

His eyes were still bent on the thin sheet of paper, and this was what they read there :—

Do you realise what you have done ?

Leonora.

"Is there anything the matter, Gerald?" his bride asked, half-wonderingly, half-anxiously, as she saw his unmistakable agitation.

Dartford crumpled the telegram in his hand as he answered her, looking at her with eyes that had a new and mysterious trouble in them :

"My darling, I ought not to have married you. I ought not to have married you."

CHAPTER IX.

THE FIFTY BANK-NOTES.

"Where is my daughter?" Mrs. Somerton had asked of the butler that morning when she had sat down to her twelve o'clock breakfast without seeing any sign of Ray, whose presence and talk usually made that breakfast as pleasant as any meal taken alone by a society lady, whose digestion is not over good, can ever be.

"I don't know, ma'am," had replied the respectful man-servant whom she had questioned. And his countenance had worn a puzzled look, brought there possibly by some remarks which had been made downstairs by Elise, Miss Somerton's French maid. "I haven't seen my young lady for the morning. And, if you please, ma'am, Elise thinks there's something wrong. She says my young lady has gone away."

Perplexed and slightly alarmed, Mrs. Somerton had sent for the above-mentioned Elise, her daughter's maid, and had questioned her anxiously.

"Where is your mistress, Elise?"

And forthwith Elise had begun to wring her hands and shake her small, neat head, and indulge in the antics common to French girls of her class when there is trouble or mystery in the air.

"Oh, madame, Mademoiselle Ray went away zis morning at seven o'clock and she have not come back yet!"

"She went away at seven o'clock?" Mrs. Somerton had stared amazedly at the neat little black-haired woman. "Where to?"

"I do not know, madame. Mademoiselle did not tell me. She took her dressing-case with her. She would not let me carry it, but took it herself. Mademoiselle said she was going to find a cab, and zat zere would surely be one at Hyde Park Corner even if she could not get one just outside ze house. But she did get one outside ze house. She got into it and was gone like a flash."

"Did you hear where she told the cabman to drive to?"

Mrs. Somerton had risen from her seat at the breakfast table, forgetting her coffee and roll and the devilled kidneys which awaited her attention. Her face, which looked considerably older by daylight than in the evening, had become suddenly pale above the petunia silk and white lace of her morning gown.

"No, madame, I did not hear. I did not leave ze house, because mademoiselle told me not to. I only looked from ze window."

"And she said nothing as to where she was going?"

"No, madame." The Frenchwoman had shaken her dark head emphatically. "And now something have happened to her and she will not come back. Oh, my poor mademoiselle! She did not even take breakfast. She had only a cup of chocolate and a biscuit. I asked her if I should go with her, but she only said, 'No, Elise.' I thought something must be wrong, as she was going out so early. Oh, my poor mademoiselle! What will madame do to find her?"

"Madame," pale to the lips, had sent off a telegram to her husband in the City. Immediately upon receipt of that telegram, Marcus Somerton, the banker, had come home, fuming. Was it possible that, as her mother suspected, the girl had run away to avoid marriage with Humphrey Boyne?

Never, surely, had there been in any house before a greater turmoil than that which had upset the Somertons' house in Grosvenor Place that morning. Mrs. Somerton had fainted and it had required all the efforts of the lamenting and gesticulating black-eyed Elise to restore her to consciousness. The banker himself had fumed and raved, and had even cursed his lost daughter in unmeasured language.

"She has done it to ruin me!" he repeated in a voice loud enough to be heard all through the house from garret to cellar. "She knew she would ruin me if she refused to marry Humphrey Boyne, and she has done it on purpose. She has run away rather than save me in my time of trouble. This is what people's children do nowadays. There's no love in them, nor any gratitude. But I'll get her back. I'll make her pay for this. I'll put the matter in the hands of the police, and they shall bring her back to this roof. That's what we'll do, Sophia. We'll show her that she isn't going to let her father go to his ruin like that because she's taken it into her foolish head that she doesn't like Humphrey Boyne! I'll make her see that a daughter's duty to her parents isn't to be got out of quite so easily as she supposed. Don't lose heart, Sophia; she shall marry that man and save us yet."

"He had better be told of this, hadn't he?" Mrs. Somerton had cried.

"Humphrey? No, not yet," the banker had decided. "He mustn't know anything about it if we can help it. We'll get her back to-morrow, and then the less he has known the better. A man doesn't like to marry a woman, however much he loves her, if he knows she hated him so much that she bolted from her home and left her father in the lurch to face beggary sooner than become his wife. So we'll keep quiet about it, and when he comes in this evening he can be told she's gone on a visit somewhere. Confound her! Where, in heaven's name, can she have gone to?"

At one o'clock a servant entered the library, where the banker and his wife were still talking, bringing a letter on a salver. The letter was for Mrs. Somerton, and she started when she took it and looked at the superscription.

"It is from Ray," she said. And, there being no one in the room with her but her husband, she read the letter aloud:—

DEAR MOTHER AND FATHER,—I could not bring myself to marry Mr. Boyne, and so I have gone. Forgive me. You shall not suffer by what I have done. Do not try to find me, because any attempt to do so will be useless. Do not fear for me. I shall be safe.

Try to believe me always, until I see you again,

Your very loving daughter,
RAY.

"It is all over, Marcus," said the mother despairingly, realising the inevitableness of what had happened. "It will be quite useless to try to get her back. She does not mean to return; anyhow, not yet. But it is a terrible thing to have our child go out like this into the world without knowing where she has gone, or what she is doing or means to do. Where can she have gone? What can she intend to do? With whom can she be sheltering?"

"She's ruined me," muttered the banker hoarsely, sinking heavily into a deep easy chair and staring blankly before him. "She's ruined me—ruined us both, Sophia. That's all I know or care about her now. She didn't think her father or mother worth saving at the cost of marrying a man whom her silly girlish fancy didn't take to because he happens to be fat and not particularly handsome. But I'll inform the police all the same. I'll——"

He started up from the chair into which he had so lately sunk down, and took a few strides across the room in the direction of the door. But his wife restrained him.

"Where would be the good of informing the police now, Marcus?" she remonstrated. "You can't treat your own daughter as if she were a criminal. And if they found her and brought her back to-morrow, she would never marry Humphrey. Her letter shows us that quite plainly."

Marcus Somerton paused. "Show me the envelope," he demanded. With his cheeks grey, and his lips blue with rage, he was hardly recognisable as the confident, pompous banker whose success had hitherto been so supreme as to make his name a magic word in the financial circles of London.

Mrs. Somerton handed him the envelope of Ray's letter, and he examined it closely and with the trembling eagerness of wrath.

"It's got the London postmark," he muttered. "And by the time marked on it she must have posted it this morning soon after leaving the house. Curse her! I only wanted fifty thousand pounds to get me out of one of those passing difficulties that every man, even the luckiest, gets into at some time or another, and I should have been safe. A mere trifle of fifty thousand to stop up a gap, and I should be in as stable a position as any man in the City; whereas, without it—just for lack of that mere drop in the bucket, as it is in comparison with my usual financial speculations and responsibilities, I must lose everything and sink too deep to rise again. And she, the little vixen, the unnatural daughter, has deliberately preferred that I should lose everything—that I should be ruined and my name become a by-word where once it was held great. You call that the choice of a daughter, Sophia? Because I call it the choice of a monster. I curse her, and shall curse her to the end of my days."

"Oh, Marcus, she is still our child!"

It was at this juncture that the door of the room opened again and Aline Garth came in—Aline Garth, a girl of twenty-four, small and plump, with a pretty figure, and with a face which some people called good-looking and others merely saucy.

She came in in the manner of one perfectly at home in this house. And, indeed, Mr. and

Mrs. Somerton's home had sheltered her since her early childhood. The pity that Marcus Somerton had shown her had, indeed, been quite remarkable, considering the selfishness of his character and the difficulty that most people had always experienced in getting anything out of him. Aline had been the daughter of one of his friends—an unlucky man called Garth, who had speculated on the Stock Exchange not wisely but too well, and had committed suicide in consequence, leaving his two-year-old child, whose mother had died at her birth, utterly unprovided for.

Whether Marcus Somerton had felt himself to be responsible in any degree for the suicide of his unhappy friend and was remorseful on this account, was never known, not even to his wife. All that Mrs. Somerton knew was that one day her husband had asked her if she would agree to their taking the helpless little orphan girl Aline and bringing her up under their own roof. He suggested that in order to spare the girl's pride when she should grow older, she should be taught to consider them as her uncle and aunt, and Mrs. Somerton, who had no child of her own then, had consented.

In this way Aline Garth had come into the house of the Somertons, where she had stayed ever since. When the child Ray had been born, Aline had called her her cousin. And as cousins they had grown up together, only being separated when occasionally one went away on a visit without the other. On the present occasion Aline had been away on a three weeks' visit, and so the great event of Ray Somerton's life—her discovery that Dartford loved her and her flight with him to save herself from marriage with his brother—had taken place without her knowledge.

Her bright brown eyes were wet now, as she rushed into the library, having just come home.

"Surely it can't be true what they're telling me—that Ray has gone away?" she cried in consternation and doubt. "Surely it can't be true!" Yet even in that moment she saw by their faces that it was true, and the tears that were in her eyes rolled on to her cheeks.

The banker looked at her angrily. In his rage the thought came into his mind that he ought to have been rewarded by Providence for his charity in feeding and sheltering her by having everything go well with him. He had had, even at the time of taking her, a dim idea that charity would very likely prove a paying game, and that he would be rewarded for his pitifulness to the orphan by good luck in his Stock Exchange speculations and in every other department of life in which luck was an advantage. Now, therefore, he felt that she had failed him, and in his blind, all-round rage against his fate he hated her.

"Yes, Ray has gone," he answered her, "and I shouldn't be surprised if you had a good deal to do with it by putting silly ideas of romance into her head. It ought to be a girl's best romance to save her father. But Ray has left me in cold blood to face ruin. In a few days' time the crash will come, for I'm not in a position to get from any other quarter the fifty thousand pounds which Boyne had promised to advance me on the condition that he should marry Ray. The marriage was to take place immediately, and he was to pay the money down on the wedding day. Even he must have known what the wretched girl was capable of, since he was careful to insist on the marriage actually taking place before he handed over a penny of the promised sum. And now I am ruined! Ruined!"

"Poor Ray!" Aline hastened to defend the girl who had been to her as a sister. "Perhaps she could not help it, uncle. Perhaps she did not go of her own will, but was taken away."

"Taken away?" The banker laughed harshly and bitterly. "People can't be taken away against their will in these days, Aline. In this case I might have thought she'd gone with that scoundrelly gambler, Dartford, but that he has several engagements here in town this week, and I understand that he's going to keep them. He wouldn't dare to show his face in his own set again if he'd taken her away. In any case, I don't care a straw what's become of her now. As I said to you just now, Sophia, she's left us to face beggary, and that's enough. Let us wash our hands of her."

He went out of the room, staggering rather than walking.

Mrs. Somerton turned then to Aline Garth, who stood in blank consternation, looking after the man whom she supposed to be her uncle. The girl had not removed her hat yet, but stood in her outdoor things exactly as she had arrived from the railway station.

"Oh, auntie!" she cried now, rousing herself after a moment. "What a strange homecoming after my three weeks' absence! I wish now that I'd never gone away on that visit."

Mrs. Somerton looked at her angrily, her face hardening. Why was this girl left when her own child had gone from her?

"You heard Mr. Somerton say that we were ruined, did you not, Aline?"

The bright brown eyes of the small, round-figured girl were lifted in new wonder. Why did her aunt speak of her uncle to her now as "Mr. Somerton?"

"I did hear uncle say so, auntie," she replied gently. "But I hope very much that it isn't really true."



"How can I help having faith in you, when I love you, and have taken you for my husband?"

"Mr. Somerton does not tell lies, Aline," was Mrs. Somerton's cold rejoinder. "And now I think the time has come for me to tell you that he is not your uncle at all, nor am I your aunt. You are not related to either of us in any way whatever. You are simply a stranger whom we took into our house out of charity. And so you must see that——"

"A stranger?" interrupted Aline Garth, with a new and different consternation showing itself in her look. "A stranger?"

"Yes, a stranger; nothing more." Mrs. Somerton's tones were icy now. "We invented the story of your being our niece to account to the world for your living under our roof and being treated by us as a daughter. In reality you are the child of a mere acquaintance of Mr. Somerton's, who speculated unfortunately on the Stock Exchange and then was weak-minded enough to shoot himself when ruin came. You were already motherless, and when he committed suicide he left you without any provision whatever; so you had either to be looked after by private charity, or to go to the Workhouse. Mr. Somerton did not like the idea of the Workhouse for you, and so we took you. You cannot deny that we have been good to you. We have not only sheltered you and fed you and clothed you, but we have given you the same education as we gave to our own daughter. You have had the same chances in life as Ray has had, and it is your own fault and no one else's that you are not by this time settled in life. You have had to my knowledge two offers of marriage, both of which you have thought fit, for some reason unknown to me, to refuse. You have, in fact, been treated by us in a manner that nobody else would have treated you—you, a stranger and a pauper, without the faintest shadow of a claim upon us. So that, you see, you can have nothing to reproach us with."

"Reproach you?"

The two words were all that Aline Garth could say for a moment. She was too completely overwhelmed and dazed to know what to say or what to think. She stood motionless, gripping with one small hand the back of the nearest chair. Her bright eyes were still fixed on the woman who stood before her in petunia silk and white lace, and her breast rose and fell agitatedly beneath the tweed of her jacket. She seemed to know by instinct that there was something more, something worse, to come. The face of this woman whom she had always hitherto believed to be her aunt, related to her by blood, was now so stony and pitiless that she could almost have thought it was the face of someone else—someone whom she had never known before.

Mrs. Somerton went on in a voice that would have been perfectly calm but for a touch of resentment in it:

"We are on the brink of ruin now through Ray's heartless and wicked conduct in refusing to marry Humphrey Boyne. We shall have to leave this house and sell all our furniture, and live in future in a humbler way, with no luxuries and no society. This being the case, you will see quite clearly that we cannot be expected any longer to provide for you—you, an outsider. We shall have quite enough to do to keep our own heads above water, without continuing to support a stranger out of charity. Charity is all very well for the rich to practise, but when one is no longer rich one cannot afford to be charitable. Therefore, Aline, you must look for a home elsewhere than with us; and, naturally, the sooner you find that home the better. You have cost us more than enough already. Indeed, where your charities are concerned, you have spent our money like water, as if it had been your own. It has made me feel quite ill many a time to see you giving to this, that, or the other fund, or institution, or something of the sort, when I knew all the while that, as far as your real position went, you ought to have been in one of the institutions yourself, instead of liberally flinging about our hard-earned money."

The girl put out her hands, then, as if imploring mercy.

"But I did not know! I did not know!" she pleaded desperately, wildly, in a low, tense voice that was unlike her own. Every vestige of colour had forsaken her round cheeks and quivering lips, and she was shaking like a reed. Her pretty, piquant face—the face of a brunette—was more piteous in its pallor than a more perfectly beautiful countenance would have been.

She joined her outstretched hands in her appeal. "I did not know," she repeated miserably. "Why didn't you tell me before? It would have been kinder to have told me. I thought I was one of you and—and that so, as we were all rich, I had a right to help the poor a little. If I had known it would have been different. If I had known—if I had even thought for a moment—that I was a stranger—an interloper—I would have gone away long ago, but now I will go at once—at once. You shall not have to keep me any longer. I will only say good-bye to Mr. Somerton and thank him for all that he has done for me, and then I will go."

Mrs. Somerton frowned a little.

"If you have any sense of gratitude in you at all you will not ask Mr. Somerton for money at this crisis," said she, her tone implying that she was certain that the girl's expressed wish to bid good-bye to the banker who had been a second father to her was only an excuse to beg from him. "You ought to have some money

saved up out of all that has been allowed you for your personal expenses. If you have not, it is your own fault."

"I have a little," Aline Garth admitted, still in a low voice of pleading. "But I shall not take that with me, because it is not properly mine, but yours. I shall not need money. I am going to the Sisters of Bethlehem. I have helped them a little sometimes, you know, and they will not refuse me shelter if I'm willing to work for them."

An hour later she had gone, and the Grosvenor Place house knew her no more.

Her four-wheeled cab, with her small port-manteau on the top—for she had taken no more luggage than was absolutely unavoidable, counting her fine clothes as no longer hers—had hardly disappeared from within sight of the windows of the house when a servant entered the room in which Marcus Somerton was pacing restlessly to and fro and announced that a messenger had arrived and was waiting in the hall with a packet, which he would only deliver into Mr. Somerton's own hands.

The banker hesitated for a few moments. He was not in a state either of mind or of body to disturb himself about trifles. Then it flashed across his mind that the packet might be from Humphrey Boyne. Roused by this thought, he ordered that the messenger should be shown in to him.

A neat looking, moderately well-dressed man, who might have been either a clerk or a gentleman's gentleman, presently appeared, carrying in one hand a large white envelope. This envelope he held out towards Marcus Somerton, who saw that it was addressed to himself, and took it. He offered the messenger a gratuity, but the man declined it and withdrew.

The banker opened the envelope, on which was written "Personal." Inside it there was a smaller envelope, also addressed, like the outer one, to himself. Opening this, he found inside a rustling packet of crisp papers. Another moment and he had realised that these crisp papers were bank-notes.

Astounded and wondering, he examined and counted them. They were all thousand pound notes, and there were fifty of them. Fifty thousand pounds! Exactly the amount of money that he needed to tide him over the temporary financial difficulty which was menacing him with immediate ruin.

He stood staring at the fortune in filmy paper which lay on the table before him. He was amazed as he had never been amazed in all his life before.

"From whom does this money come?"

No message, no single word, had come with it; and the inscription on the two envelopes was in a handwriting that he did not recognise.

From whom had the money so providentially come?

CHAPTER X.

THE HONEYMOON.

"Are you happy, Ray?"

"Oh, yes, dearest, very happy! There is only one shadow to mar my sunshine, and that is the thought of my father and mother. It was cruel of me to leave them as I did. And poor Aline, too! But, surely, by this time they must understand that my going from them was not as heartless as it seemed. And by-and-by, perhaps, they will forgive me."

Lord and Lady Dartford—known here now in the south of France as plain Mr. and Mrs. Boyne, were sitting under the olives on the hillside that leads up to the old-world little village of Roquebrune from the sea-shore near Mentone. Down below in the town the white houses glared in the strong sunshine, and the deep, cloudless blue of the sky was reflected in the still bluer Mediterranean. Most of the English visitors in Mentone were at this hour either drinking tea at Rumpelmeyers, making the tea-drinking an excuse for going there to see all the beauty and fashion of the Riviera, or else had gone in to Monte Carlo, drawn by the great gambling-house there as by a magnet. But the newly-wedded Lady Dartford and her adoring husband had preferred to leave the dazzling white houses and the gorgeous hotel garden, with its marvels of colour and scent, behind them, and come up here to the grey-green shade of the olives.

Even from where they now sat, here on the steep hillside, they could still catch glimpses through the spaces between the trees of distant gardens, with the yellow glory of mimosa bushes in them, and of houses half covered with purple bougainvillea; glimpses of lemons growing, and of veritable bowers of bloom in which the brilliant hues of flowers were set off by the shadowy green of palms whose leaves stirred softly by the faintest of breezes. The man and woman so lately wedded as to be hardly more than bridegroom and bride, clasped each other's hands as their eyes looked on the beauty everywhere about them.

"Happy? Ah, yes! Ah, yes!" Ray murmured softly again.

And once more her blue eyes sought between the trees the glitter of the blue sea that shone and sparkled in the sunlight. After a moment she turned to him again.

"Are you sure it has not half ruined you, Gerald, to send that fifty thousand pounds to my father?"

Dartford smiled as he shook his head.

"Haven't I told you ever so many times already that there is no need for us to trouble about money, Ray?" he answered her with playful reproach. "I could have afforded the fifty thousand very well in any case, even if

there had been no more money coming in to make up my balance again. But, as a matter of fact, there's been a great deal of money coming in. You have brought me luck, Ray, as well as happiness; yes, luck even in financial affairs, and lately everything that I have touched has turned to gold. So you need have no fear for our future as regards money matters, my darling."

She smiled back to him brightly, joyously.

"Then I don't think there is any need to fear for our future in any way, Gerald," she said with a glad, confident ring in her sweet voice.

Dartford laughed, and a curious shadow crept over his features. It was a shadow that Ray had seen there before, and it always startled her and filled her with anxious wonder.

"What faith you have in me!" he exclaimed in a tone which she could not understand—a tone which seemed to have a ring of bitterness and passionate regret in it. "What faith you have in me!"

Ray lifted her face again quickly, and he saw a world of love in her eyes.

"How can I help having faith in you, when I love you, and have taken you for my husband?" she asked him softly.

There was no one anywhere near them, not even a peasant girl come down from the rock village above to gather olives, and Dartford, strangely moved, drew her into his arms and kissed her.

"God bless you, my love! God bless you, now and always, whether I live or die!"

Yet again she looked at him wonderingly, and this time a little reproachfully.

"Whether you live or die, Gerald?" she exclaimed. "Why do you say such a thing as that? Why should you, you who have not yet reached the prime of your life, and who are so strong and so well, think about dying?"

Dartford laughed a little uneasily as he stroked the soft smooth waves of bright hair that half covered her ears, and then merged into loose shining coils at the back of her shapely head.

"Why should we talk of gloomy things in such a paradise as this? It is hard here to remember that there is such a thing as death; yes, or work either, or responsibility, or the need for having money. All that one wants to do here is to live and have one's eyesight to see the flowers, and love—love with all one's heart and soul and strength."

His fingers began to toy with a bunch of violets that nestled among the folds of lace at her breast.

"They're too large, these violets, aren't they? And too scentless. Judging by your look, Ray, I believe that you would rather have the small, fresh, fragrant English violets after all."

She nodded. "Oh, far rather! Far rather! There is more heart and more romance and more sweetness in one of our home violets than in all these overgrown things that are like purple geraniums for size and have no fragrance at all. I hesitated a good deal before I put them in my dress."

For some moments again both were silent, enjoying their rest here on the hillside. Then again Lady Dartford spoke. She lifted her face once more and found that her husband's eyes were fixed upon her. Small wonder that he gazed upon her tenderly, for she was looking her best to-day in mauve and white lace, with a broad hat wreathed with Parma violets shading her dimpled face and her copper-coloured hair.

"I wonder, Gerald, if anyone has found out or guessed the secret of our marriage yet?"

Dartford started slightly and smiled nervously.

"I hope not," was his quick answer. "I have taken every precaution to keep the secret. That was why I forced myself to leave you day after day during the first week after our marriage and keep my London engagements, so that people, seeing me about town as usual, might not suspect me of being connected in any way with your disappearance from home. And your father, of course, has not the faintest idea where the fifty thousand pounds that I sent him came from."

Ray's face grew wistful.

"Why must it be kept such a secret, Gerald, and for a whole year?"

Dartford looked troubled. He bent towards her again and kissed her.

"My darling, you shall know my reasons by-and-by. I wish I could tell them to you now! But I cannot; I must not! You must have patience, Ray, and trust me. Not that I am worthy of your trust. God help me, I am far from being worthy of it! But I can at least say to you that, as heaven is my witness, everything that I do now and shall do henceforward is, and will be, done for your sake only and for your happiness. One day before very long, love, you will know why it was necessary that the world should not be taken into our confidence in the matter of our marriage. The time will come soon enough when everyone will know of it."

"But—but—there is no reason why we should not have married, is there, Gerald?" she asked. "I have thought sometimes that there must be. I think so every time I remember how strangely you looked at me when the telegram was brought to you as we were leaving the church on our wedding day, and how you turned to me suddenly and said that you ought not to have married me. What did you mean then, Gerald?"

Dartford drew a quick breath. He turned his head aside.



"Oh, the burden of indignity and shame which that innocent child would have to bear!"

"I meant that I knew myself to be unworthy of you, Ray, even as I know myself to be unworthy of you now. What was I? A gambler, a spendthrift, a scoundrel—yes, a scoundrel, since to drag one's family down into the mud is to be guilty of scoundrellism of a pretty low order—and——"

"Gerald, I will not have you say such things of yourself!"

The young bride's clear voice had real rebuke in it. She looked at him closely, searchingly, and although she could only see a part of his face, she was aware that the shadow that she wondered at and dreaded had stolen over his features again. And, for a while, she said no more. She said to herself that she could afford to disregard this little shadow in the midst of such happiness, such wonderful and supreme gladness and peace of heart as were hers now. Perhaps it was not to be marvelled at that he felt some remorse for his past life. But she herself felt very sure that all that was bad in that past would never be repeated. He had been a gambler once, but he was not a gambler now. The spirit of recklessness was in him no longer.

One day during this spell of honeymoon joy they had gone over from this quiet Mentone shore to Monte Carlo, and she had wondered if the sight of the great Casino would bring the gambling fever into his blood again. But it had not done so. He had not wanted to enter the place—in her eyes a place accursed—but had passed its splendid front quite coolly, with hardly a single glance. They had contented themselves with walking in the Casino gardens and looking at the wonderful beds of cyclamen and ixia and low-growing roses. Once Ray had shivered, and Dartford had asked her why she did so.

"This place makes me feel unhappy," she had answered. "I am always afraid of coming upon some poor wretch lying dead on one of these paths; dead with a bullet in his brain or his heart and with a revolver grasped tightly in his hand. Oh, Gerald, this place is a hell! I am so glad that you did not want us to go into it."

He had smiled. "I have played there often enough in other years, but I shall never want to play there again. I have done with gambling, my darling, and I shall never play for money any more in my life, either here or anywhere else."

"Thank God!" had been her fervent rejoinder. Now, as they sat on the hillside under the shade of the olives, Dartford asked himself whether this, his present life of wondrous happiness—happiness such as in other days he would not have thought possible—could be real.

Was all this joy real? Was all this love real? Or were they only a beautiful vision that in a little while would pass away as if it had never been?

And could his own new luck be real—that financial luck of which he had spoken just now to his bride and which he had half-playfully said he owed to her?

With the object of making provision for her for the days to come—for when, in a year's time, he should be forced to fulfil his pledge and take his own life—he had lately speculated largely on the Stock Exchange; and everything, as he had also told Ray, had turned to gold beneath his touch. Certain sound but quiet enterprises that he had invested in had boomed unexpectedly, and now promised to return him thirty per cent. for his investments. How had this chanced to be the case with him, who in all his life before had been financially unfortunate?

"It's the devil's luck," he muttered to himself. "It's the luck of the damned. I am condemned to die, and so fate has decreed that before I go I shall know what it is to have a share of the good things of this world."

At this point in his thoughts he became aware that his bride was looking at him fixedly and anxiously.

"What is it that troubles you, dearest?" she asked him. "Such a strange shadow comes over your face sometimes! What is it that brings it? Are you not happy, with all our love and in these first weeks of our wedded life?"

"Happy?" Dartford echoed the word with a catch in his breath. He went on passionately: "My darling, I am happy as I never was before in my life, and as, I think, surely no man can ever have been before."

And he spoke no more than the truth. He had not lied to her in saying that he was happy. But, oh heaven! the shadow of the looming death!

CHAPTER XI.

THE OLD LOVE AND THE NEW.

"If you please, sir, there's a young woman outside asking to see you. She looks very respectable—rather like a Sister of Mercy or something of that sort. Will you see her, sir?"

One of Humphrey Boyne's junior clerks made this announcement to him on a particular morning when the head and front and, in fact, sole representative of the firm of Humphrey Boyne and Company sat in his private room in no very amiable mood.

Humphrey Boyne was not a man who cared about being beaten in the game of life, or being thwarted in any way; and to have been foiled in his purposes by a girl whom he had already

regarded as irrevocably his own, was more than he could easily get over. Now, therefore, when his clerk came in with this intimation that a young woman who looked as if she belonged to the Sister of Mercy class wanted to see him, he was more occupied in chewing the bitter cud of the disappointment which Ray Somerton had inflicted upon him than in attending strictly to his business. Not that he was actually neglecting his business. Women might come and women might go—or men either, for that matter—but Humphrey Boyne would never forget that his first business in life was to make money; yes, to add to his already enormous wealth if only in order that he might thereby have it in his power to make them that had vexed and thwarted him suffer for their audacity in so doing.

He had no suspicion that his brother was concerned in Ray Somerton's disappearance. The idea had certainly once come into his mind, but he had thrust it aside, saying to himself that there were circumstances which made it impossible that Dartford had had anything to do with the girl's flight from home, rather than save her father from ruin by marrying him—Humphrey. In the first place he did not think that Dartford would dare to marry any woman when he was under a bond to take his own life within the space of one short year. Besides, if he did marry any woman, it would be an infringement of the terms of their bargain; terms which did not admit of his forging new ties. Dartford, he said to himself, would certainly have done no such thing as this, even for love of Ray Somerton.

Where, then, was Ray during these weeks? And had any man been connected with her running away? Or had she only taken refuge for a time with some woman friend whose name she did not at present choose to give?

"What am I to say to the young woman, sir?" the expectant clerk reminded him.

"Did you say she looked like a Sister of Mercy?" enquired Humphrey Boyne, rousing himself. "Because, if she's anything of that sort, you can send her away. I don't want to see any of those funereal-looking wretches. Besides, they only come to beg. This is a business house, not a place for beggars."

"Very well, sir."

The junior clerk disappeared. But after an interval of a few minutes, he presented himself again.

"What is it now?" his employer irritably demanded to know.

"The young woman says, sir, that she's sure you'll see her if you hear her name, because you know her. Her name's Garth—Aline Garth, I think she said."

"Garth? Aline Garth?" Suddenly Humphrey Boyne remembered. "Yes, I know

her," he admitted, but hardly less irritably. "You can tell her I'll see her for five minutes, but no longer."

The clerk departed a second time and presently the door of the private room was once more opened, this time to admit a woman. The woman was only a girl; she looked, indeed, singularly young for the begging mission on which she had evidently come. She was in a plain black dress and a short black cloak, and she wore a plain black hat. Something in the cut of the cloak, which disguised the pretty roundness of her figure, must have put into the clerk's head the idea that she looked like a Sister of Mercy. Her cheeks, which had always been very rosy in her former worldlier days of comfort and idleness, were pale now, and her brown eyes, although as bright, were gentler, and withal very sad.

The financier stared at her as he pointed to a chair. He had been accustomed to see her as charmingly dressed as Ray Somerton herself.

"Miss Garth! How do you do? But what on earth have you got yourself up in that guise for?"

The girl smiled wistfully as she answered him:

"I belong to the Sisters of Bethlehem now. I have not actually joined them, but I work with them, and now I am collecting money for their mission. I have come to ask if you will give a little help. You are so rich that to give a little would cost you no trouble, no self-denial; and the money would do so much for the poor. You, who live in luxury and have nothing about you but things that cost a lot of money, can have no idea of how much even a few shillings can do when spent economically. How many hungry people they can feed and how much suffering they can avert."

Humphrey Boyne's countenance hardened. He was a man who never by any chance gave a single sixpence away in charity, and he hated to be begged from.

"Never mind all that," he said impatiently. "Tell me about yourself. Why did you go away from Grosvenor Place? Why are you not there still with Mr. and Mrs. Somerton?"

Aline Garth's bright brown eyes filled with tears.

"They—they would not let me stay," she replied in an unsteady voice. "Mrs. Somerton told me that I must go away from them and find another home. She told me that I was not really Mr. Somerton's niece, as they had led me to believe I was, but a stranger, an outsider, the daughter of a former acquaintance of Mr. Somerton's who had got ruined on the Stock Exchange and had committed suicide. Mrs. Somerton showed me that I had never had any claim upon them of any kind, but had only been fed and clothed and sheltered by them out of charity. I could not have stayed

with them after that, even if they had wanted me to. There would have been nothing for it but to go away in any case, even though going away nearly broke my heart. Oh, Mr. Boyne, it was terribly hard to go! But it was not so hard as to hear that I was not of the blood of them that had brought me up, but had only been a pauper, fed by them out of bare charity. You see, they had brought me up to be proud, and to have my pride and self-respect broken was almost as bitter a thing as the parting from my old home and from Ray, who had been like my sister."

"The parting from Ray?" The financier's florid countenance darkened with the re-awakened memory of the mortifying disappointment which Ray Somerton had dealt out to him. "I should not think you need have grieved much at leaving her. She is a hard-hearted, self-willed, untrustworthy girl. You need not try to defend her. I know how she has treated me, and that shows me well enough what manner of woman she is. I am not going to shut my eyes to her treachery towards me just because she happens to be very young and very beautiful. But we need not talk of her. I prefer to hear the rest of your own story. What did you do when you left the Somertons' house? I myself have not been there since the evening of the day on which Ray disappeared from her home and from society, and so I have heard nothing about you."

"There isn't anything more to tell," the girl said humbly. "It was on that same day that I, too, went away. I had just come back from a three weeks' visit to some friends in Yorkshire, and when I reached Grosvenor Place, Ray had already been gone some hours. I went an hour afterwards, and found a refuge with the Sisters of Bethlehem."

The financier leaned nearer to her across his table with its litter of papers.

"Have you any idea where Ray Somerton is now?" he asked her, with an eagerness which showed that, however he might deny it, he did still take an interest in the woman who had fled from her home rather than marry him.

Aline Garth looked up in surprise. "Doesn't anyone know where she is? Don't Mr. and Mrs. Somerton know?"

Humphrey Boyne shook his head angrily.

"Mr. Somerton has stated in a letter to me that he and his wife know nothing even yet of where their daughter is or of what she is doing, but that, as she has sent them a second letter—also with no address on it and posted in London, like the first—to say that everything is well with her and that she will come back in a few months' time, they are content to wait."

Aline Garth moved uneasily in her chair.

"That is very strange," she murmured in an anxious, unsatisfied tone; "very strange

indeed. I can't think how they can rest without finding out more about what has happened to her. I can't think how you can rest, Mr. Boyne—you, who loved her and were going to marry her—without finding out more."

The florid-faced Humphrey smoothed his moustache grimly.

"When a woman has treated me as Ray Somerton has treated me, I wash my hands of her entirely," he said with decision. "If she could afford to turn away from a man with my wealth, and from the position which I could have given her, she may justly be left to any fate that overtakes her. There is only one thing more that I wish to say in connection with this disagreeable subject, and that is that I should like to know if you can tell me where Mr. Somerton got hold of that fifty thousand pounds that he needed to save himself from the ruin that threatened him then. Are you aware, Miss Garth, of the source from which he got the money?"

The girl shook her head, her candid, brown eyes expressing wonder.

"I've always believed, Mr. Boyne, that the money came from you. I've always hoped so."

"Hoped so? And why, pray?"

The financier's hard eyes were harder even than usual at this moment, as they were fixed on her with an icy demand for an answer, but Aline Garth did not flinch under their look.

"Because, Mr. Boyne, it would have been so generous of you to save the father all the same, even though the daughter had not found herself able to carry out her promise to marry you as payment for the money."

Humphrey Boyne laughed harshly and contemptuously.

"That's all very well, my girl, but I want value for my money," he retorted.

His tone was brutal; and Aline Garth rose, her face flushing.

"Would it be of any use for me to ask you to help our Sisters of Bethlehem Mission a little?" she ventured to say timidly.

The financier looked at her more closely than he had hitherto done. He had seen her four or five times a week for a whole year at the Somertons' house in Grosvenor Place, but he had not on any of those occasions observed her as much as he had done during this present quarter-of-an-hour that she had spent here in his office. In Marcus Somerton's house he had taken absolutely no notice of her, no doubt because her red-checked prettiness had always been put into the shade by the truer beauty of Ray Somerton. But to-day there was something in her plain, black dress and cloak and hat, and in the new gentleness and humility of her manner which attracted him curiously. And his eyes softened as he looked at her.

"If you could give even a little money—even three or four shillings—it would help me more than you would think. There are so many cases of utter destitution that need immediate relief, so many cases of sickness for which medicine must be bought, so many little children that haven't clothes enough to keep out the cold! Oh, Mr. Boyne, if you could see what we see and hear what we hear every day you would be pitiful! We go straight into the poor homes and feed and wash the little ones and nurse the sick night and day; and we see what you, who never go into these places, can never see—the good that half-a-crown can do when it is properly spent. Won't you give just a little, so that we may not have to say 'No' when the hungry ask us for bread?"

Humphrey Boyne put his right hand into one of his pockets and brought out a sovereign.

"There! you can take that," he said roughly, holding the coin out to her. "And now tell me, Miss Garth, do you like this kind of life that you are leading now?"

At this question a smile irradiated Aline's face.

"I like it better than the old life—the old selfish life of pretty dresses and horses and carriages and continual theatres and dances," she answered with a sincerity of voice and look which even the financier could not doubt. "I am beginning to love it. I've learned already that it makes one happier to be doing something for others than to be always thinking about one's-self. When Mrs. Somerton told me to leave the only home I had ever known and to go out into the world, her words struck upon my heart like a terrible sentence. But now I see that it was best that I should go; just as it must have been for the best that Ray Somerton should not marry you, or God would not have put it into her heart to turn from you."

When the girl had gone—the girl who had changed so completely in outward appearance from a fashionable young lady to a plainly dressed and humble helper and sister of the poor—Humphrey Boyne sat thinking of her for a full hour. Her face had appealed to him. He could not forget it even for a moment.

That face, brown-eyed and wistful, haunted him all the day through, and by the end of the day he knew that Aline Garth, the bright-eyed, round-figured little brunette whom he had known for a year without bestowing on her any more notice than if she had been one of the costly articles of furniture in Mrs. Somerton's drawing-room, had suddenly become in his sight an attractive woman whom a man might love and might want for his own.

"I wonder what she would think of me if she knew of the little bargain of death which I have made with my brother?" he asked himself with a queer, sickly smile.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SUICIDE'S CHILD.

Ten months had passed and Dartford was anxiously pacing the library in the Marchioness of Orr's country house, in the little out-of-the-way Suffolk village in which he and Ray Somerton had been married.

He was pacing the room very anxiously, with quick, restless steps, and with his ears straining to catch any sound from the room above. For a great event was imminent. A child was to be born to him and to Ray, who lay in the bedroom immediately overhead. He was waiting momentarily for the announcement of the birth to be made to him.

Yes, ten months had passed; ten months of wonderful happiness, unshadowed save for that looming spectre of death which had come ever nearer and nearer to him until now it menaced him at very close quarters indeed. He and Ray had passed a glorious spring in the south of France and in Italy, and a glorious summer in Norway. The joy and ever-fresh delight of their mutual companionship had only been broken by occasional partings for a week or a fortnight, at intervals when it had seemed to him necessary that he should show himself in London so that her continued absence might not be connected with him. They had purposely lived where none of their own English social set would be likely to meet them and to recognise in them Lord and Lady Dartford under their assumed names of Mr. and Mrs. Boyne. Then, with the passing of the summer, they had come to England, and had made their winter home in this little country house of Lady Orr's, which, in her sympathetic kindness of heart, the Marchioness had been only too glad to lend them. And now they had reached mid-winter and on this dark December day a child was to be born to them.

Poor Ray! She, who was so soon to know the new and rich joy of motherhood, did not know, did not dream, that the man whom she loved, the man who was her husband and the father of her child, was not to live the winter through. Only lately she had been speaking of where they should go when they left this house in March. She had asked whether by that time the secret of their marriage would have been disclosed to the world. He had answered her with an inward shudder that certainly everyone would know of their marriage by then. But he had not told her in what manner that long-withheld knowledge would come to society and the world. He had not told her that it would be through his death by his own hand that people would come to know that he and she had secretly been joined together in the bond of wedlock.

He groaned aloud now as he paced. The horror of the death that threatened him was great, but it was as nothing compared with the

horror of leaving the woman he loved, of abandoning her, as by his suicide he must abandon her. Suicide! The thought of it became for the first time hateful to him in itself. When he had made the compact with his younger brother, whereby he had bound himself to take his own life, he had not thought of self-murder as a black sin, a foul crime; but now that he considered his passionately-loved wife in the light of the widow of a suicide, he saw the act of shooting himself—for he had planned to commit the act of shedding his own blood with a revolver—in the true light. He saw that his death by his own hand would be a shameful act, which would leave his heart's darling a bitter and terrible heritage of shame for herself and her child. And his soul grew dark at the prospect.

Ah, yes! There would be the child to think of soon.

His pacing slackened. He walked to one of the little windows of the room and looked out through the diamond panes.

Dusk was falling over the countryside, and with the dusk the snow was coming. Earlier in the day there had been a high wind, but now this wind had fallen and the thick white flakes were drifting down through an intense stillness.

Dartford drew the curtains across the windows and turned back into the room. Lady Orr called this house a farmhouse and considered it to be lacking in comfort; but nevertheless, it would have been difficult to find a more comfortable or even a more elegant room in any country home than was this library now, with its big fire of logs burning in the deep ingle, with its walls red-papered above a panelling of black oak, and with the black oak of its other furniture—its table, bookshelves and chairs—contrasting with the warm hue of a rich red carpet. What better setting for her stateliness could even one of the wealthiest of Marchionesses desire?

Dartford went to the ingle-nook and stood watching the fire. His face was very pale and his features looked pinched.

So the child that was now coming into the world was destined to be a suicide's child?

Oh, the horror of it! Oh, the burden of indignity and shame which that innocent child would have to bear!

Was it too late now to spare it this indignity, this shame, this dark stain upon its innocent name?

"Is it indeed too late?"

He asked himself the question aloud as he had asked it a score of times before. And the answer which his own judgment gave was again the same that it had always been:

"It is too late. Nothing can be done now. I have made my bargain, and in honour I am bound to abide by the terms of it. I have

enjoyed the profit of it—for without Humphrey's money I must not only have been ruined, but I could not have married Ray, and should not have known this year of supreme love and supreme happiness—and I must not now shrink from the payment. I should not be worthy of Ray if I were coward enough to shrink from it. No, there is no way out. The price of my earlier years' folly must be paid in full. This spectre of death that is always haunting me will come close and seize me in a month's time. . . . Ah!"

He fancied that a faint sound like the wail of a newly-born infant had reached his ear from the room above, penetrating the solid oaken beams of the ceiling. He stood listening, straining his faculty of hearing to catch the faintest repetition of that sound.

No repetition of it came to him. But presently other sounds reached his ear; sounds as of the creaking of the oaken stairs that led down from the bedroom landing into the square hall. He strode across the floor to the room door and opened it softly, expectantly. Some person was approaching it. It was a woman—his wife's maid.

"The child is born, sir," she told him. "And it's a son."

Dartford went back into the library, shutting the door behind him.

So the child was born? And it was a son? A son?

This fact of the sex of the child startled him, oppressed him, overwhelmed him. A tumult of wild thoughts surged in his throbbing brain. He was too much overcome in these first moments to realise anything clearly, to put any order into the confusion of these thoughts. But from amid the wild chaos of them, one plain and naked fact leapt up and confronted him.

By his marriage, whether secret or open, he had practically broken the terms of his terrible contract with his younger brother. For now the birth of his son had cheated Humphrey out of the title.

CHAPTER XIII.

AT THE ELEVENTH HOUR.

"There's a lady outside who gives her name as Mrs. Prince asking to see you, sir," said the junior clerk, making another announcement to Mr. Humphrey Boyne.

It was not only Dartford who was counting the time as the date drew near for the fulfilment of the ghastly bargain. His younger brother, the wealthy Humphrey, was counting it also. At the exact month before the date for the completion of the contract by Dartford's death he had said to himself: "In a month's time I shall have the title. There'll be no



"If you'll pay me, I'll prove to you that Lord Harford's marriage with Miss Sedgwick was illegal, for he was already married to me!"

Humphrey Boyne then, but in his place there'll be Lord Dartford." After that he had begun to count the days. "In thirty days I shall be Lord Dartford." "In twenty-nine days I shall be Lord Dartford," and so on, until now he had come to the twenty-first day before the date fixed for his brother's suicide as payment for the gift of two hundred and fifty thousand pounds which he had made to him.

No remorse had come to him yet. Never once had the idea entered his head that in sheer humanity he ought to give his elder brother a chance of paying the loan back in money and not in blood. He was a business man in whose eyes a bargain was a bargain, and its terms must be kept at any cost. Besides, he would not have given Dartford the money if he had expected him to repay the gift in kind. No, in setting his brother on his feet again with that two hundred and fifty thousand pounds, he had had the deliberate and fixed intention of improving his own position by getting rid of this reckless spendthrift of a brother who in his eyes had disgraced the family, and becoming himself the possessor of the Boyne peerage in his stead.

He had almost brought himself to believe that this arrangement was a very good thing all round. After all, he argued with himself, Dartford had had his day, and would not lose much by dying, say, twenty years earlier than he might naturally have done. And, when all was said and done, what was death by one's own hand?

A good revolver, a clean and smooth bullet through heart, or lungs, or brain, and it was all over. No pain, or next to none, and no trouble—a moment's work and everything over and done with. This was not much for a man to do who had made a failure of his life. Why need there be any fuss about it, or any remorse afterwards, for the man who had suggested the tragedy and had gained by it?

"The value that ordinary people put on human life is simply absurd," he said to himself. "There is no reason whatever why we should hold life so amazingly sacred. The law ought to allow people to commit suicide without making the to-do over it that always is made. The whole point of view of the community on these matters is utterly nonsensical."

Where was Dartford now? He wondered very much. He had heard of him having been seen in London lately, but he had not himself seen anything of him. His real estimate of his brother's honour, however, can be gathered from the fact that he never doubted for an instant that on the proper date Dartford would turn up to carry out his compact of death. Very well he knew that his brother was not a shirker and never would be one. Very well he knew that he had only to wait patiently until the time came for the evening

newspapers to be published, on the date fixed for the completing of the bargain, and then he would see, printed for all men to read: "Suicide of Lord Dartford."

And so he waited patiently, preparing meanwhile for the honour of a peerage which was presently to come to him, by the purchase and furnishing of a town house which should be worthy to be his home in his new dignity as viscount.

And what of marriage? Did he contemplate taking some woman to wife and so providing a mistress for that home?

He did not himself know. He had thought a great deal about Aline Garth during these past few months. He had seen her often, and had—oh, wonder of wonders!—taken a great interest in the mission of the Sisters of Bethlehem, even contributing large sums of money to its funds. He accounted to himself for this new spirit of charity in him by telling himself that as he was going to be a peer it would pay him socially to get to some small extent a reputation for being philanthropic. He did not confess to himself that he did it all for Aline Garth's sake; because to admit this to be the case would be to make an admission of foolishness, since a man who in a few weeks' time would be a peer ought not to take any trouble to please a poor girl, but ought, on the contrary, to do everything that he could to secure to himself the attention and liking of one who was rich and had a high social position.

Did he love Aline Garth?

He could not tell. He only knew that she attracted him and appealed to him strangely, and that she was very often in his thoughts.

"There's a lady outside who gives her name as Mrs. Prince asking to see you, sir," said the junior clerk now entering Mr. Humphrey Boyne's private room in the Old Broad Street office on the morning of the day which was exactly three weeks from the date that Humphrey Boyne waited for—the date on which his brother, Viscount Dartford, must take Death by the hand.

"Mrs. Prince?" repeated the financier. "I have never heard of her."

"No, sir. She says you've never seen her. But she says she's got very important business with you—business connected with Lord Dartford."

"With Lord Dartford, my brother?" Mr. Humphrey Boyne looked taken aback.

"Yes, sir. That's what she says, sir."

"You can show her in," decided the financier. He was conscious of a slight agitation. What had happened now? What business concerning Dartford could any strange woman have come to him upon?

He had a feeling that he was in the hands of fate. He was so near the gaining of his soul's desire—the inheritance of the peerage—

that he was sometimes secretly tortured by a fear lest something should occur to deprive him of it at the eleventh hour.

He waited, rapping with impatient knuckles on his table. And the lady who had announced herself as "Mrs. Prince," entered the room. The financier saw before him a woman who might have been described as a fine human animal. She was somewhere about five-and-thirty years of age, tall, and full of figure, with bold, flashing black eyes, and a great deal of very black hair that was shown off by a hat of a bright rose colour that was unsuited to the time of year and the particular kind of weather that now prevailed. She was, in fact, altogether overdressed, and a good deal about her suggested that she was an adventuress. Her features were coarse, and her voice, when she spoke, was anything but refined. Taken altogether, she would have been described as a woman who fell a good deal short of being a lady, but who, nevertheless, had a fine figure and a certain sort of good looks, and had known how to make the best of these advantages where the weakness of man was concerned.

"How do you do, Mr. Boyne?" was her greeting of the well-known financier whom she had never seen before. In one flash her black eyes took in all his characteristics—his unattractive mouse-coloured moustache, his red complexion, his unsymmetrical fatness, and the hard eagerness in his little ugly eyes. With a great clinking and rattle of bracelets with many charms hanging from them, she sat down uninvited in the most comfortable-looking chair in the room and unfastened her chinchilla-trimmed velvet coat. "It's quite hot in here," she went on. "I wonder how you can stand it. It's bad enough outside this muggy weather, but in here it's stifling."

She threw open the velvet coat, revealing a red satin lining, settled herself anew in her chair, and again addressed the financier:

"I've come to give you some information which you'll find valuable, Mr. Boyne. Of course I know, as everybody else knows, that you are counting on coming into the peerage when your brother dies."

She stopped short. She had been on the point of saying more, but a sudden change in Humphrey Boyne's look had checked her. She watched him for a few seconds in silence.

Humphrey Boyne himself had grown pale at her allusion to his hope of inheriting his brother's title. The thought: "Can she know anything of the bargain?" had chilled his blood, and the colour had momentarily left his face. But in the next instant he comforted himself with the inward assurance that this strange woman could not possibly know anything about an affair which had been absolutely private between himself and his brother. But what could she have to say about his brother?

He listened while his visitor went on:

"Well, as I said, of course you're counting on getting the family title when your brother dies. You're not aware of the step he's secretly taken to put you out of court in that matter? You didn't know that he was married, did you?"

"Married?" echoed Humphrey Boyne with a start. "Married?"

The odds and ends hanging from the bangles on the bold-eyed lady's wrists clinked and rattled again as she waved one gloved hand expressively in a free and easy way.

"Why—yes, married. Lord Dartford was married on the quiet, down in the country—in Suffolk—between ten and eleven months ago. He's been keeping the marriage a dead secret and taking as many precautions to keep it from getting known about as if the discovery of it would mean his hanging. But I found it out. Trust me for doing that, being an interested party. I knew all about the affair on the very day it took place—yes, and the very hour in which it took place—only it wasn't my business to make an outcry about it, and so I've never said a word to a living soul till now."

The blood was again slowly forsaking Humphrey Boyne's cheeks. Was this woman speaking the truth? And, if so, why had Dartford done this thing, peculiarly situated as he had been? And was it possible that it could make any difference to the fulfilment of the terms of the contract between him and his brother—the contract which was to be completed in tragedy three weeks from to-day?

"You are absolutely certain of this marriage having taken place?"

He put the question sternly, his mortification showing in his voice as well as on his face. And the woman who called herself Mrs. Prince laughed a somewhat brazen laugh.

"I'm positive of it. He married Ray Somerton, the girl that you were going to marry yourself. When she ran away from home she went with him. They got married that same day down in Suffolk, and they've been dodging about in quiet places ever since. Oh, they haven't been going about as Lord and Lady Dartford, of course! Gerald's got more sense than that. He looks gay and open and laughing and all that, but when he wants to keep a thing secret he keeps it secret, and no mistake about it. They've been calling themselves plain Mr. and Mrs. Boyne, and he's been coming up and showing himself in town a bit now and again, so that nobody should say that he had disappeared as well as Ray Somerton, and suspect that there was any connection between the two. Oh, he's a cute one, Gerald is, for all his frank smile that makes you think he couldn't keep anything back from you if he tried! Why, Mr. Boyne, how angry you look! Is that because he has married the girl you wanted to get yourself?"

But the financier did not answer this very unceremonious, not to say impertinent, question. Neither had he appeared to notice that she had spoken of his brother as "Gerald." He was tugging at his moustache, as he had a habit of doing when he was enraged. His little eyes had an ugly look in them that threatened ill to somebody. They were very mean, those little eyes of his; the meanest perhaps that one would have found in a long day's tramp through London.

The bold-faced, black-eyed woman amused herself again by watching him for a little while in silence. Suddenly he spoke.

"Have you any proof of all this that you have told me?"

She fixed her eyes full upon him.

"Proof? You have only to go to Liverpool Street and take a train to Beccles, and then drive out to a little God-forgotten hole of a village that I can tell you of, and you'll find your brother and his wife there in an old-fashioned house belonging to nobody less than the Marchioness of Orr, who has lent it to them until next March. And, what's more, Mr. Boyne, if you go you'll find there a new-born baby. It's a week old now, and it's a boy."

"Eh?"

Humphrey Boyne had for a moment sat as one petrified; but now he started up out of his chair and was staring at her fiercely, his face livid except for the streaks of red in the cheeks that no emotion, whether rage or terror, would ever drive away, and his little, hard eyes steeled with fury. He brought down one clenched hand heavily on the table in front of him.

"It's a lie!" he declared fiercely, frenziedly. He spluttered the words in his ungovernable rage. "It's a lie—and you know it!"

But the woman in the chinchilla-trimmed velvet coat only laughed her brazen laugh a second time.

"A lie, is it? Well, you'd better go down to the place and see the baby for yourself, since you don't believe what I tell you. You'll be satisfied then, I don't doubt. Here, give me a bit of paper and a pencil: I'll

write down the address in full for you as a proof that I know what I'm talking about."

She rose from her chair with yet another clinking of bangle trifles and rummaged herself amid the litter of things on the table for the paper and pencil which the financier had not stirred to give her. She found no pencil, but she took his fountain pen and with it scrawled on the back of a letter the address at which Lord Dartford and his bride were to be found:

Ormont Mills,

Near Beccles,

Suffolk.

"There!" she said, restoring the pen to the place whence she had taken it and tossing the paper over to him, "Now you can go down and see for yourself as soon as you like. The sooner the better, as far as I'm concerned. And, meanwhile, I tell you again that your brother is married and that he has a son, and that therefore, whatever happens, unless, of course, the baby dies, you will not get the title, unless—"

Humphrey Boyne turned his eye upon her in fierce questioning. In his fury he was incapable of any speech other than a muttering of curses.

The bold-eyed woman came close to him and caught his arm, undismayed by his distorted and menacing countenance.

"Listen here!" she said with something of command in her unmusical voice. "Listen here, Mr. Boyne! I gave my name to your clerk just now as Prince—Mrs. Prince—but that was only for convenience sake. My real name is Boyne—Leonora Boyne—and if you'll pay me a certain sum of money that we can agree upon presently, I'll prove to you that Lord Dartford's marriage with Ray Somerton was illegal, for the very good reason that he was already married to me! I'll give you proof of this, and then the new-born son can't have any claim to the peerage, but, as there aren't any children of your brother's marriage with me, you'll be the heir to it, as you were before. That peerage is worth paying for—eh? I'm his wife; not she! and her child can't claim his title or even his name."



*(To be concluded in the next number,
early April 1916.)*



The Editor
WISHES TO
Remind you

that it is not yet too late to enter for our great skill competition, in connection with which prizes of the total value of £1,000 are offered. The third list of pictures is published in this number, but to enable fresh competitors to start to-day, the first two lists of puzzle pictures have been reprinted in this issue.



"HAPPY DAYS!"
THE HONEYMOON TOAST.

From a painting by C. F. F. F. F.

By permission of the Boston Photographic Company.

HOW IRELAND is GOVERNED



By MARY SPENCER WARREN.

THE nominee of the Sovereign in Ireland is the Viceroy, an official appointed under the Great Seal of the United Kingdom, his tenure of office depending upon that of the Ministry. The office is an ancient one, dating back to the days of Henry II.; the salary, originally £580, has for many years stood at £10,000. A popular Viceroy will, however, probably disburse three times that sum, for he entertains largely, journeys very much about the country, and subscribes generously to a multiplicity of objects of an assorted description. Of necessity then His Excellency must be a wealthy man, otherwise he cannot maintain the honour and dignity of his position.

The Viceroy, as the representative of the Sovereign, is surrounded by quite an imposing Court, and much state and ceremony is observed on all occasions. The officials

appointed to the Court are numerous, comprising a State Steward, a Chamberlain, a

Comptroller of the Household, the Master of the Horse, a Gentleman Usher, three Gentlemen-in-Waiting, several aides-de-camp and assistant aides-de-camp, a private secretary and assistant secretaries, also some Court chaplains and physicians.

The actual government of Ireland is carried out at home, Ireland being represented in the Imperial Parliament by twenty-eight Peers and one-hundred-and-three Commons. The Lord Lieutenant, as the Executive, is assisted by a Chief Secretary

to Ireland at a salary of £4,425 per annum, and a Privy Council appointed by the Crown. There is also a Lord Chancellor with a salary of £8,000, and an Attorney-General and Solicitor-General salaried at £5,000 and £3,000 respectively, together with several judges of the various courts.

The Lord Lieutenant has two residences, Dublin Castle and Viceregal Lodge,

Phoenix Park. At the former His Excellency



THE
COUNTESS OF DUDLEY,
Vice-Regent of Ireland.

The Countess of Dudley, Vice-Regent of Ireland, and her little child.

and his wife reside for only about six weeks in the year, that is, from the beginning of February until the 17th March; the major portion of their time is spent at the Lodge, which, although only some three miles from the city, is really a country residence, standing, as it does, in the midst of a beautiful park which is seven miles in circumference, and has a magnificent view of the Dublin mountains and surrounding country.

The Castle itself is of ancient date. The first complete building was finished in 1213, but it was erected on a site where formerly

state functions during the visit, but was actually staying at the Lodge in the park. Queen Victoria again went over in 1853, ostensibly for the Exhibition, and it may be mentioned that on each of these occasions Her Majesty was accompanied by our present Sovereign and the late Prince Consort. Also there were two subsequent visits of the Queen, one in 1861 and one in 1900. In 1885 King Edward and Queen Alexandra—then, of course, the Prince and Princess of Wales—went to Ireland during the Earl Spencer's Viceroyalty, and actually stayed at the Castle. His Majesty held a levee, and



The Privy Council Chamber, Dublin Castle.

Photo. Miss Joseph Brown.

stood a fortress raised by the Norwegians in 842. The building has been much added to and used for a variety of purposes; one tower of it indeed served as a State prison for over five-hundred years. At present a portion is devoted to state apartments and Vice-regal residence, and the remainder to State and other offices.

The Castle has had many illustrious visitors within its walls, but to mention the Victorian era only, we find that the late Queen was first there in August, 1849, when Her Majesty held a Drawing-Room in the throne-room. She also performed other

Her Majesty a Drawing-Room. They then went to Killybegs, and on their way back through Dublin, remained for a brief period at the Vice-regal Lodge, being in the country altogether about three weeks.

This much must be said: the Castle has no good approach, the entrances to the courtyards being reached through narrow thoroughfares. Once inside the quadrangular upper courtyard, the principal entrance is almost facing; this, supported by Doric pillars—gives on to a large outer, and then an inner, hall, with a handsome stone staircase stretching away beyond. From the



HIS EXCELLENCY EARL DUDLEY, THE VICEROY OF IRELAND.
The representative of His Majesty King Edward VII. in the Emerald Isle.

first landing the staircase diverges right and left to an upper landing, or hall; the whole of the above-mentioned on state occasions being banked with rose foliage and flowers, and lined with troops of the castle guard.

Certain of the apartments in the Castle play a very important part in Vice-regal ceremonies, one of which saloons is that known as St. Patrick's Hall.

Each Lord Lieutenant is Grand Master of the Order of St. Patrick. In that capacity he holds all the investitures, and he may himself confer a simple Order of Knighthood. The hall is of fine proportions, with a



Mrs. Moran.

carrying painted panels of St. Patrick preaching to the native Irish, the Coronation of George III., etc. On either side of the hall are hung the banners of the Knights, with the crest, helmet, sword and stall-plate immediately beneath. The throne at the far end is draped in crimson Irish poplin, the gilded throne chair being upholstered in pale blue, the colour of the Order.

The investiture function is most stately. The Grand-Master, robed in his sky-blue mantle, and attended by his Household and staff, all in full dress, enters in imposing procession, the band

concave ceiling, meanwhile playing the National Anthem, and



The Throne Room, Dublin Castle, wherein are held investitures, Drawing Rooms, balls and other important ceremonies.

when these have taken their places the Knights follow in procession, in order of creation.

The ceremony is somewhat lengthy, comprising the putting on of ribson and badge, girding with the sword and robing with the mantle, unfolding the banner, and reading the prescribed admonitions, as well as the calling over of the names and titles of the Knights-Companions. The Order consists of the Sovereign, a Grand-Master and twenty-two Knights; the badge is of gold, surmounted with a wreath of shamrock within a circle of blue enamel containing the motto—*Quis separabit?*—with the date of foundation encircling the Cross of St. Patrick. Installations formerly took place at St. Patrick's Cathedral, but were discontinued upon the pronouncement of Irish Church Disestablishment. His Majesty King Edward was the last to be so installed.

St. Patrick's Hall is also used for a supper-room on the occasion of a state ball. This is a sit-down function, the procession entering with much prescribed ceremony. The guests form a line, and Their Excellencies, preceded by the State Steward, and followed by the Comptroller and various members of the Household, pass through to the strains of "The Roast Beef of Old England," given by the band. Their Excellencies and chief guests sit at a small table in the centre, four long tables radiating from it in star shape.

It may be observed that the Viceroy is treated by all guests as though he were the actual Sovereign. Ladies make formal Court curtsays, and gentlemen profound bows, and should His Excellency enter a room where guests are seated, it is correct for them to rise and remain standing until the Viceroy himself is seated. At the end of the supper the National Anthem is played, all guests imme-

diately rise, and His Excellency then proposes the health of the King. The ladies follow Her Excellency from the hall, each one curtsaying in the direction of the Viceroy as they emerge from the door. The longest dance of the season is the St. Patrick's ball. On this occasion as many as eight hundred persons will sit down to the tables, and here it may be noted that during the season as many as sixteen or seventeen thousand persons are generally entertained at the Court.

The state dining-room quite near, is long and narrow, and is chiefly noticeable for the paintings of Viceroys.

The state dining-room quite near, is long and narrow, and is chiefly noticeable for the paintings of Viceroys, chronologically arranged. It is used as a supper-room on ordinary dance nights.

The throne-room is the scene of many important ceremonies. Here all levées and Drawing-Rooms and many balls are held, and here a new Viceroy is partly inaugurated, and here he holds his farewell reception on leaving office. The Drawing-Rooms are brilliant functions, held at 9.30 in the evening. There are two during the short season, also



Miss Mackenz.

A lady of the Irish Court.

Miss Mackenz.



THE STATE ENTRY OF THE VICEROY INTO DUBLIN UPON HIS ACCESSION TO OFFICE IN 1862.

two ladies and two or three dancers and balls. From the windows of this apartment the Vice-regal party witness the "trooping of the colours" on St. Patrick's Day; and this, together with all other state apartments, is thrown open for promenade on great occasions. The throne chair is of William III. period, and the gold and white canopy is hung in crimson Irish poplin.

It may be recorded here that when the late Duke of Marlborough was in office (1876-1880), the depression in Irish manufacturing industries was very great, and the Duchess of Marlborough—as a stimulus to trade—caused the whole of the state apartments to be hung in rich Irish poplin. Another occasion worthy of note, when native industries were much helped, was during the term of office of the Earl of Aberdeen. One of the large garden parties

at the Vice-regal Lodge was attended by between four and five thousand guests, and at the express wish of the Countess, all guests appeared in goods of Irish manufacture. Her Excellency herself wore white poplin; nearly all the ladies were in light poplins, and the gentlemen in tweeds. This, and other actions of Their Excellencies, were of immense benefit to the people, and when they left office the monster Trade Parades and Demonstrations which took place were the most remarkable ever witnessed in the city. There are beautiful drawing-rooms and various other state saloons in this wing, with good private suites for the Vice-regal Court and guests.

Then there is another wing which is really given up to the Chief Secretary and his staff; the most important apartment here being that known as the Privy Council Chamber. This Council consists



Miss Richardson—a beauty of the Irish Court.



Mrs. Hamilton Leitch.

CHAS. JACOBUS.

Native materials were used entirely in the construction of this edifice, which was opened on Christmas Day of 1814, having been erected to take the place of a former one; the entire cost of the building exceeded £42,000.

Dublin Castle has fine up-to-date stables, the state carriages being splendidly harnessed and accompanied by postillions in pale blue jackets. Military escorts attend when their Excellencies ride out for state functions, and even for private drives two of the mounted constabulary precede the carriage.

A Court Circular is issued daily, as at His Majesty's Court, this being copied into the leading papers, and duly particularises all dinners, balls, attendances at various functions of the Viceroy and his wife, and the arrival and departure of guests.

Their Excellencies entertain largely at the Vice-regal Lodge in the summer, one relay of guests rapidly succeeding another. The garden parties are great features, and are often attended by between four and five thousand persons. The grounds are of enormous size, thus allowing ample space for large parties, while they possess an individual attraction in the beautiful manner in which they are laid out. One section is planned in the usual ornamental manner, while another part is almost a wild garden with plenty of grass land, undergrowth and beautiful woods.

The house is a long, low building of but two storeys in height, having some fine apartments in it, many of which have French windows opening direct on to the terraces. Various eminent personages have been entertained here, and there is no doubt that the Lodge, as well as the Castle, will be the scene of much royal splendour during the visit of Their Majesties King Edward and Queen Alexandra to the Emerald Isle.

of between fifty and sixty members, appointed by the Sovereign, every officer of State in Ireland and various members of the Royal Family being additionally included. Here the new members of the Council take their oath, and here one part of the inauguration ceremony of a new Viceroy takes place. The room has a double line of windows, looking into the upper and lower courtyards. The window-bargings are of rich poplin, but otherwise the chandelied ceiling, dados and doors of the apartment have a plain, businesslike appearance.

The Lord Lieutenant has a throne seat in the Chapel Royal of the Castle. This edifice is in the lower courtyard, has a beautiful exterior, and is divided into a centre and two side aisles by graceful Gothic pillars. The roof is handsomely groined with tracery mouldings, and is supported by clustered pillars, at the summit of which are angelic heads of modelled stucco. The stained-glass windows carry the arms of the Lords Lieutenant; and there is a beautiful marble pulpit and a magnificent service of gold plate.



Miss Hamilton.

A daughter of the late General Hamilton.

MR. POTTER'S VACATION.

THE ROMANCE OF A MARCONIGRAM.

By HERBERT D. WARD.

Illustrated by W. R. LEIGH.



MR. PELEG POTTER staggered into his private office as if he were a drunken man. Potter, of the great brokerage firm of Brooks and Potter, was not what might be called a dissipated person. He was simply "worn to a frame." He was the younger member of the firm, its energy and brains, and he had not even time to grow old. Marry? When could he have wedged in fifteen minutes for the marriage ceremony, to say nothing of the necessary hours of courting deleterious to a successful business career? Why, for years he could not remember when he had had all the time he needed for eating, while sleep was a lost art.

Pel. Potter was rich beyond the wildest dreams of avarice, but with a wealth that sucks vitality as a leech sucks blood.

As Arthur Brooks, the head of the firm, looked in, he caught Potter's gaze fixed upon vacancy, while both of the man's hands were going through the motion of tearing strips of paper tape.

"Why, Potter!" exclaimed Brooks. With a sinking heart he recognised symptoms familiar to every old broker.

"Potter!" he called again, and shook his almost unconscious partner by the shoulder. Potter steadied his eyes and looked up.

"I say, Potter!"

"Well—old man," was the mumbling answer.

"It's no use, Potter. You've got to get off and take a long rest. You can't stay here——"

Peleg shook his head stubbornly. "Can't do it. You know it. Cashier's laid up, and I have got to see that deal of Trans-Atlantic Telegraph through—by——"

His eyes lapsed again into vacancy.

Brooks went into his own private office, leaving his junior partner in this semi-comatose

condition. The senior called his confidential clerk, gave him a few instructions, and sent him off. He then rang up the office of a great steamship line. The *Victoria Regina* sailed that day at twelve for the West Indies, and, at an exorbitant price, Brooks engaged the purser's cabin for his ailing partner.

"If I can only get him away from the daily papers and the office," Brooks said to himself, "a month on the water will make a new man of him."

At precisely a quarter to twelve an automobile stormed the wharf at the West India Docks, and between Brooks and a valet Peleg Potter was led up the gangway and gently deposited, like a precious bundle of securities, in the purser's deck state-room. Before he could understand or protest his partner had left him.

The last fluffy visitor had gone ashore, the last inevitable passenger had barely caught the steamer after the gangway had been cast off, and the voyage had begun.

Two days after this preposterous event, Peleg Potter awoke, himself and alert. The last thing he remembered was booking the order of a rich lamb to buy ten thousand shares of T. and P. when he knew the fool ought to have sold.

The state-room door was open, and he looked out upon the heaving horizon with amazement and growing indignation. A young lady was lying in a steamer-chair observing the same vastness. Potter could catch against the sky a clear-cut, pure profile, in spite of the thick, blue veil that hid the girl's face.

"Heavens!" he cried. "Buster!"

The young lady, aroused from her drowsing, turned her head slightly at the sound of these strange ejaculations. This motion caused Peleg such a spasm of modesty that he hastily pulled the blanket over his head, thus muffling a last agonising call of "Buster!"

Although the heavens did not fall, Buster responded, for the respectful form

of the valet darkened the cabin and obstructed the young lady from Peleg's distracted view. As the shadow fell upon him Peleg peeped out.

"For Heaven's sake," he cried, "shut that door, and tell me what this game means!"

In a few minutes Peleg had grasped the essential facts of the situation.

"I thought at first I had been kidnapped," he mused, for he knew one person who would give many thousands of pounds for his absence for ten days. Here he had been at sea two days. What might not have happened in that time? The cold sweat inundated his pallid face. But Mr. Potter was used to blows. He drew a long breath, and instead of the dust of a fetid city, ozone, life-giving and exhilarating, filled his lungs.

Oh, for news! Oh, for a ticker! Two days without a breath of the Stock Exchange seemed impossible, incredible.

By this time Potter was half-dressed. He cast a glance out of the port-hole. There, before him, at rest, peaceful, relaxed, as if there were nothing in the broad world to do but to exist and sleep, the girl lay, a dream of health, a picture of repose. Mr. Potter opened his mouth and took another huge gulp of uncontaminated Atlantic air. He felt as if something around his chest snapped. Somehow or other, stocks did not seem as important as they did a minute ago.

"To the deuce with the Stock Exchange!" he cried in his heart. He felt almost on the utterance of that heresy as if he had been bathed in a benediction.

"Buster! I say, Buster! Bring me a passenger list, and be quick about it; and have the steward send me up something to eat. Drink? Not on your life, you—idiot! Hurry, or I'll——"

But Buster had long since disappeared, grinning like a schoolboy. For Buster (who was christened Benjamin Boyd Buster) was having the best time of his life.

In ten minutes Peleg Potter was scrutinising the passenger list for familiar names. The first thing he noticed was that his own was not down. This was accounted for by the fact that his passage had been engaged literally at the eleventh hour, and that he was occupying the purser's private cabin. There were plenty of familiar names, but none that seemed to suit the lady in the chair. Yet he knew her, or ought to. His door was now hooked back, and as he gazed at the fair figure and the fairer profile, stocks

fell from his soul, and the joy and the hope of life coursed through his veins as they had never done before.

"What, sir?" asked Buster, respectfully, bringing in a heaping tray.

To the imperative gesture Buster lent a grave face.

"You may find out that young lady's name," whispered Potter, with great dignity, and pointed through the door.

* * *

"Alice Emery!" The name held the financier like a combination lock. He had never thought much of women before, and names had never been associated in his mind with people, only with corporations. It now occurred to him as he lay there on his sofa, alone, looking out upon the interminable blackness fringed with electric glare, that Alice was the most beautiful name in the world. For time was hanging heavily on his hands, and in that unaccustomed ennui sentiment took possession of a soul that had never harboured her before.

"Her father is ill in the state-room, sir," repeated Buster, as he put his patient to bed. "And the young lady has no friends, and eats alone in the dining-room."

"At what table?"

"The purser's, sir."

"Ask the purser if I cannot be placed next to her at breakfast to-morrow."

As Peleg Potter dressed the next morning, he felt life stirring within him. How fatuous the existence, how ignoble the struggle, that he had left behind! To spend one's best thought in scheming how to ruin your friend legally did not seem as admirable as it had. As the steamer sped on, the Exchange, the tape machine, and all that these instruments of joy and woe represented, receded and thinned. These few days of seclusion from men, from the excitement of internecine warfare in which rumour was the disappearing gun, and the ever-ready lie the hammerless revolver—this respite had brought Potter on speaking terms with higher values. Solitude always does that. And then that girl, so lovely, so restful, so beautiful and self-contained, was unconsciously training the gambler into an inexplicable (to him) disgust for the brawling pit where, as the toss turns, a plunger may become a millionaire or a bankrupt.

Now for the first time, Potter understood the charms of a newsless life. The thought of a morning paper or a stock quotation nauseated him. Perhaps the ocean performs



The main-room door was open, and Potter could catch against the sky a clear-cut, pure profile.

as many miracles as love or religion—who knows? At any rate, here were the dregs of life beginning to be turned into strong wine, and Peleg Potter was assisting at the transubstantiation, without a suspicion that he was already a changed man.

So, when he started for the dining-room, he thrust out his chest, drank the air deeply, so that his waxen cheeks became tinged with a healthy red, and blessed his partner.

As he entered the huge dining-saloon, following his mournful valet, he heard a flutter of paper that annoyed him. Everyone seemed to be reading. No person noticed him as he approached his seat. As he slipped into his chair he noticed that the lady of his hopes sat on his left, with an empty seat beyond. Her calm face was flushed, and bent almost motionless over her plate. Before him lay a grey sheet about the size of a magazine, with four pages of printed matter. The name arose as if upon stilts.

The Trans-Atlantic Herald.
MORNING EDITION.

And at the top of the first column in large italics appeared the following announcement:

The *Victoria Regina* is in constant communication with land. Messages can be sent to England or the United States by the Marconi system at any time of day or night. Important news and quotations are Marconigrammed hourly to the steamer from our London offices.

Astounded, dazed, troubled, outraged, Peleg Potter pushed the sheet away from him. Heavens! Must the subtle poison of daily news inoculate his system again. He felt as if his very manhood were on trial. If he succumbed now to quotations he knew that he would be bound in tape for the rest of his life. He was at the parting of the ways. Indignant that in mid-ocean, of all places, where a man should be most protected and least disturbed, he should be pursued by North, East, West, South—coined into that fateful word NEWS—he was about to thrust the sheet under the table, when the following headlines leaped at him and snared him unawares:

Gigantic Embezzlement.

HENRY C. SOUTE, THE CASHIER OF THE FAMOUS
BROKERAGE FIRM OF BROOKS & POTTER,
HAS DISAPPEARED.

There is a defalcation of over one hundred thousand pounds in his books. Detectives are on his track. His daughter has disappeared with him. The well-known firm is able to bear the blow, but has offered a reward of ten thousand pounds for the capture of the thief, etc., etc.

Potter looked up from his morning paper. His eyes encountered the exquisite profile of his neighbour. She had not raised her head. Dreamily he noted that she was flushed, and he could have sworn that tears were falling into the poor girl's plate.

Mr. Potter's morning paper had dropped from his hands. Although there were over a hundred people in the dining-room, he was unconscious of the rustle and bustle and clatter about him. He had even forgotten his cashier's defalcations. He only saw those precious pearls drop fast and faster. The young lady must have felt his impertinent stare without divining his sympathy; for, with a sudden superb motion of the head, she arose from her seat, turned her back upon Potter, and calmly walked out.

"As I was saying"—the words floated stridently into Mr. Potter's ears from the opposite side of the table. "I know the firm of Brooks & Potter very well. Why, I used to go to school with Potter. He's as bold as a lion, cautious as a hyena, with no more heart than a pebble. Why, I took passage in order to be present at the birth and christening of the *Trans-Atlantic Herald*. I tell you this steamer marks an era—the most portentous era the world has ever——"

The traveller looked up and caught the cold, contemptuous look from Peleg Potter's eyes. But Ananias Eli was not to be abashed. He had property but no home. He was one of those eternal travellers who changes his acquaintances as you change a sovereign, and who consequently throws off a reminiscence or an experience as easily as you puff off smoke, and with as little feeling of responsibility as to how it will evaporate.

Not ten feet away, at the head of the table, sat Phineas Sutton, the purser, sleek, good-natured, resourceful, whose easy eyes saw everything, and whose bland countenance betrayed nothing. When he caught Mr. Potter's warning glance he obeyed it.

The rustle of the papers continued. Each one seemed absorbed in his own news. That Potter should be entrapped in the first steamer that should keep in continual touch with the land was exasperating. Besides, he felt, somehow or other, that Miss Emery's tears were due to some news brutally thrust before her notice.

Mr. Potter was in a somewhat dangerous mood. He had not yet looked at the stock quotations, and was therefore less dangerous than he might have been.

"Excuse me"—he bowed politely to his *vis-à-vis*—"I am a little interested in this Mr. Potter whom you know."

"Oh, yes, sir, I know him quite well. They say he is dying of paresis—burning arc light at both carbons—not bad, that? Can't stand

the pace; is thirty-eight, my age, and looks fifty. These brokers are sad dogs! I'm A. Eli. I—I travel, that's all. What is your line?"

"Oh, I'm one of those sad dogs, a stock-broker, broken down, on a vacation." Mr. Potter spoke with great suavity.



The patient entered an entry of humor. "Mr. Potter? . . . Great heavens! It is Poling Potter himself!"

"Oh, ah! Why then—you must have a lot of pointers." Mr. Eli bent half-way over the table, eyeing his new acquaintance with ardour.

Mr. Potter shook his head mysteriously.

"I'm always taking flyers," persisted Ananias Eli. "I took one before breakfast. Perhaps you —?"

"Never!" The broker allowed himself an alluring smile, for there had come to Mr. Potter an inspiration, whose portent Mr. Ananias Eli could not suspect.

"In the smoking-room—say—at eleven?" Ananias Eli insinuated this appointment in an ostentatious whisper. But only the purser took the trouble to notice this circumstance.

"I should be happy to meet you there." Potter's face was inscrutable. A slight flush on the forehead was the only danger signal, and that his most intimate enemies knew well when to heed.

The little sheet—the triumph of Marconi—lay neglected beside his plate. His mind, never complex, was now for the first time confused and alloyed. The defalcation of one of his most trusted employees and friends—that was enough to worry any man—but added to that was the vision of a perfect profile, that seemed to arise from out of a mist of memory. Where had he met or seen Miss Emery before? Should he look at the quotations or not? They were on the inside page, and he could see all down the line of the table men devouring the poison instead of breakfast. Opposite to him little Ananias Eli, of protruding watery eyes, fat bullet face, and upturned nose, had just dropped his weak jaw in horror, for he had discovered a loss of two points in one of his latest speculations, and the fact was ruefully advertised in every puffy, shaven feature. Then Peleg Potter felt the madness of the Exchange sway the soul he thought quieted by ozone and an unbroken horizon. A feeling of shame overswept him. He cast his eyes furtively around, and then softly opened the sheet.

"Trans-Atlantic Telegraphs—79!" That quotation made a bull-dog of Peleg. The defalcation, the girl, his illness, everything was swept aside by the knowledge that his enemies were at his throat. Instinctively he reached out his hand for his desk telephone. He recovered, and looked at his watch. Taking all variations of time in consideration he had plenty of leisure to think and act before the market opened. He now ate his breakfast slowly, and luxuriously, for the smoke of

battle was in his nostrils, and he rejoiced at the coming onslaught, and his blood tingled like a boy's.

But Phineas Sutton, the purser, watched the broker with more than usual interest. He also detected the mustard seed of a romance, and quickly decided that Miss Emery, of Nettleworth, was not a proper party for his wealthy and generous guest; the purser made up his mind to save his roomer. But Potter retired to his cabin after his breakfast to prepare his cipher code.

Peleg Potter had planned a stupendous campaign on 'Change. It was as simple as A.B.C. And, moreover, it was based upon the very circumstance that was now ruining the broker's first and forced vacation. Believing in the ultimate and universal triumph of wireless telegraphy, he had sold all the Trans-Atlantic Telegraph that he could lay his hands on, "short." He had already hammered the stock down fifteen points by all the tactics known to a resourceful room-trader. But the "bulls" were after his hide, and the stock was rising. With Potter a decision was generally a victory. He made up his mind to take his profits, force the stock up forty points, and let those that caught him napping pay his vacation expenses. So he sent the following Marconigram to his partner; it went in the firm's cipher:—

Am fully recovered. Buy T.T. on my personal account until further notice.

This was a royal order. It meant a royal struggle. With an unconcerned manner, as if he might have ordered a Scotch-and-soda, Mr. Potter handed the telegram to his state-room steward to be sent immediately. He then sauntered into the smoking-room as the clock pointed eleven.

At his entrance Ananias Eli sprang to meet him, and, leading him to a corner, gave the orders to the steward and then began talking volubly.

"But, Mr. Eli," said Mr. Potter, when the other's breath was exhausted, "I make it a point never to advise a friend to speculate on 'Change. A broker is only another name for a robber. I couldn't possibly advise a stranger what to buy. The only advice I could give you is to leave speculation alone altogether, and put your money into stocks or bonds, or call loans and——"

"But, sir—Mr.——"

"My name is unimportant, I assure you."

"Very well, sir, but you speculate yourself continually, don't you know?"

"I do it for a living."

"Just so, just so," persisted Ananias Eli, triumphantly. "Could you not tell me what stock you could now buy for a living? That is all I want to know."

Mr. Potter looked the globe-trotter over silently and with a smileless eye. He knew the type well—a toy balloon puffed to the importance of an airship, a boy's tricycle thinking itself a Panhard racer. At last the broker spoke frankly and pleasantly.

"If I cannot persuade you to give up speculation, I can only tell you what I bought myself until I boarded the steamer. You probably understand the value to the world, Mr. Eli, of Marconi's wonderful discovery. In five years it will replace all other systems of telegraphy. Have you ever thought what Trans-Atlantic Telegraph will be then worth? I have sold T. T. for the last three weeks. But you—you might buy if you choose."

The purser casually looked out of the nearest port-hole.

"My dear sir!" exclaimed Ananias Eli, sweating exultation, "do not say any more. Excuse me a moment. I want to wire an order. And you must allow me to use my own judgment regarding the disposal of my own property. I am a thousand times obliged to you."

And with that Ananias Eli precipitated himself from the room.

Mr. Phineas Sutton, the purser, thoughtfully looked after the retreating figure of the globe-trotter. He then strolled out slowly. Mr. Potter left the smoking-room and was about to enter his cabin, when he heard a dismal groan from the second or third state-room forward of his own.

Mr. Potter looked round to call a steward. It happened that only a few passengers were in sight, far down the deck, and no steward. The groans continued, accompanied by fluttering feminine cries. Mr. Potter located the door from behind which the sounds came, and gently knocked. The cries of anguish seemed to be redoubled, and no attention was paid to him. Feeling that something ought to be done, and that he was the man to do it, Peleg Potter quietly tried the knob and opened the door.

There, kneeling upon the floor of the cabin with her head upon the bed, the young lady of his sudden passion lay convulsed with weeping.

"Leave me, daughter!" Potter caught the broken words and saw the gaunt spectre of a hand vainly endeavouring to pat the dear head before him. "Go—go, child, and leave your poor dishonoured parent to die alone."

There was something so familiar in the agonised tones of the voice, and so suggestive in the words, that Potter pushed the door open and strode in. The girl jumped from her knees with a half-articulate protest. But the patient, when his eyes caught Mr. Potter's familiar face, uttered an outcry of horror.

"Mr. Potter!" he cried. "Great heavens! It is Peleg Potter himself!" With that he fell back as if he were about to lose consciousness, if not life itself.

Potter looked down upon the ghost of his absconding cashier, changed beyond recognition, shaven, hollow, white, a broken and perhaps a dying man. At that moment the financier forgot the beautiful woman who was watching him with wild, horrified eyes. All he remembered was that there lay before him his old trusted friend, the man whom he had deemed worthy of the fullest confidence, the man, of all men, who should have been faithful unto death, and who had betrayed him. Although the cashier was ten years older than himself, Potter had always called Soule by his first name. At this moment of distrust and indignant recognition, the broker ejaculated the familiar name:

"Henry!"

Sound has electric properties. At times the sound of a dear name may change nascent distrust or hate back to faith and love. As he spoke the word "Henry," the tide of Potter's risen indignation turned. He no longer saw the malefactor; before him lay his old friend and confidant, desperately ill, and needing him. With a short cry of sympathy, Peleg Potter jumped to the bed and took Henry Soule's head in his arms.

"Go and get the doctor!" He spoke quietly to the stricken girl. "Go quickly."

"Don't," wailed the patient. "Hang me! But don't be kind. I can't bear it."

"Never mind, Henry," said the stockbroker softly. "We'll fix it up as soon as you get well."

He looked down upon the drawn and pallid shaven face with a happy, hopeful smile.

Henry Soule looked up and saw a world of kindness beaming from features hitherto expressionless to him, and he groaned aloud. "I might as well tell you," he whispered

But Potter was looking out of the port-hole. His thoughts were dancing, receding and surging like the storm-driven crests. It was *he* who had ruined his own cashier. His own coup had brought this dishonour. He had ruined many others, but it had never



"I want to tell you a secret, and I want you to promise not to breathe it to a soul.

slowly. "It was T. T. I was wiped out with everything I took. God only knows why I didn't kill myself. I hadn't the courage. It would have killed Alice. She knows it all, and forced me to take her with me."

touched home before. Then it occurred to him that he had no home; then the exquisite face of the girl rose and filled his horizon.

"Henry!" he said slowly, "I only wish you had told me before—I could have fixed you all right."

But his heart belied his words, for he was glad it came just this way, and that his friend's honour lay in his hands—a god-like gift, to be returned intact.

The door of the cabin opened. The doctor strode in, followed by the purser.

"This gentleman, Mr. Emery, is my best friend," explained Mr. Potter. "Everything must be done to save him." The doctor advanced to the patient eagerly, and took his head from Potter's arms. Beyond him, on the sill of the door, stood the ailing man's daughter, with despair upon her face, for which her father's sickness could not account.

The broker looked beyond the purser, and his heart leaped to calm the terror of the girl.

"Miss Emery," he said as quietly as he could, "will you take my arm and walk awhile? The doctor and the purser are able to take care of your father for a few moments."

It seemed hours to Potter that they walked the deck without speaking. The nearness, the touch of her arm, the thought that he was lord of her future—these sensations sent spasms to his heart. He had dealt in "futures" before, but never in such a one as this. How should he govern it and make it his own? And every time he felt that dear arm shivering in sympathy with her convulsive grief, he softly patted her fingers with a fatherly feeling that comforted her greatly.

"My dear Miss Soule, I want to tell you a secret, and I want you to promise not to breathe it to a soul."

Before she knew it, her woman's curiosity had been entrapped into a questioning "Yes?"

"And you promise not to think any the worse of me?"

"Y—yes," in a trembling whisper.

"Well——" Potter took a long, audible breath. "I, and I alone am responsible for your father's condition." After uttering this preposterous statement, he accelerated his pace, dragging the girl along with him as if he were labouring under terrible excitement.

"What do you mean, sir?" She dropped his arm.

"There! There! Don't. Let us not make a scene here."

He caught her arm dexterously, and imprisoned it again.

"Try not to judge me harshly. I will tell you all." He uttered the last five words in a stage whisper.

"Do you mean to say, Mr. Potter, that my father is innocent, and that you took the money, and—and ran away? Is that the reason your name is not on the passenger list?" Alice Soule stopped and looked her father's employer in the face with blazing eyes. Her head was now high with sudden relief, and her cheeks burned with indignation. Potter began to understand what it was to be a guilty man, and he cast his eyes down consistently.

"Won't you let me explain?" he asked, abjectly.

"If you must," rigidly.

"Well—you see—confound it all, let's walk on. There! That's better. He put all the money he could scrape together and bought T. T. I scraped all I could together and sold T. T."

"Then, instead of the stock going up, as Henry expected, the bottom dropped out of it. He borrowed a lot of the firm's money, in a quiet sort of way, and lost it all."

"Who got it?"

"Well, I suppose I got all he lost, and perhaps a little more besides."

Peleg Potter cast a quick glance down to see how she was taking it. He saw a face regal in its rigidity.

"Why didn't you return it?"

"I didn't know who lost it until this morning—and I——"

"Oh, you robber, you!" The lady came to a sudden standstill and clutched the rail with both hands, looking out over the sullen, heaving sea.

"But," urged Potter, meekly.

"Don't say another word, Mr. Potter." The words came out sharp and crackling, like icicles. "You rob a poor man of all he has. You allow the blame to rest upon him. And then you would make restitution when it is too late."

The smack of Mr. Potter's lips opening in fruitless protest did not check the girl, who had been brought up in utter ignorance of stock and its infamous transactions.

"There is nothing more to say," she added, coldly, "except good morning!" and with a stately sweep of her skirts she had gone.

As the *Victoria Regina* sped westward, the air became more and more electric with messages to the east. Like an emperor of the middle ages summoning his vassals to

his banner, so Potter summoned his clients and his friends to his standard. In the Stock Exchange in London a mob of traders wrestled for their lives.

Trans-Atlantic Telegraph commanded the attention of the world. It was "buy" or "sell," "long" or "short," live or die. But the life of the victor meant the death of the vanquished, and in that remorseless alternative lay the sulphur of the strife. For three days the quotations staggered up and down like groggy combatants, and men swooned in the frenzy of uncertainty. And Peleg Potter, sitting quietly in his cabin, generalised the battle from afar and farther off, a modern master, if not monster, of speculation—a wizard of the pit.

On the fifth morning after the steamer had sailed, Alice Soule rose from the breakfast table and walked straight to her father's state-room. In her hand she held that morning's edition of the *Trans-Atlantic Herald*, and on her cheeks fluttered a pink danger signal.

"At last, papa, Mr. Potter has righted you in the eyes of the world. I didn't think he was man enough to do it. Read what the papers say."

Henry Soule snatched the grey, damp sheet, and read eagerly:

The broker firm of Brooks & Potter have issued a statement to the Press that their cashier, Henry C. Soule, with his daughter as nurse, is on board the *Victoria Regina*, bound for the West Indies, in company with Mr. Potter of the firm. Mr. Soule was stricken with a sunstroke that left him temporarily deranged. He did not know where he was until he came to himself on the steamer, in the arms of his daughter. The firm has sustained no shortage, as the missing sum of £100,000 had been transferred to Mr. Potter's account by a clerical mistake. The firm deeply regrets the unfortunate aspersion cast upon Mr. Soule's character, has full confidence in his integrity, and has profound sympathy for him in his sudden illness. His place is ready for him when he returns from his much-needed vacation.

Alice watched her father's face as he read this extraordinary statement. She saw shame and anxiety fall from his features as if an invisible angel had removed a horrid mask.

"What do you think of that, papa," she said, sternly. "He has righted you, but nothing is said about *him*."

Then Henry Soule sat up straight in bed, his countenance rejuvenated almost past belief, and shining like a boy's. Down two little white grooves tears were trickling unashamed.

"Alice," he said, "go down on your knees and thank God for Peleg Potter."

"I can't do that, papa," she said, very calmly, "for he told me himself three days ago that he robbed you and got all your money, and he hasn't dared to show his face since. He said he sold you all you bought."

The absconding cashier looked his daughter blankly in the face. Gradually a light broke upon his mental horizon, and he gave a hysterical laugh. Then very gently he took his daughter's hand, forced her on her knees beside his berth, with her beautiful head buried in the clothes, in the same attitude that had been one of Peleg Potter's most cherished visions. Then and there the man explained to the girl, as well as he could, the remorseless vortex that sucks down honest men and casts some up on its arid banks, ruined and dishonoured and criminal, and that tosses others upon green fields, where extravagant plenty reigns. He told her how the number of the lost can never be reckoned, except at the last day, and how a chance more tenuous than the flip of a coin decides the coquettish curve of the current. Then he told her again of his own sin, and how Peleg Potter saved him because of their old friendship and still unshattered trust. And Alice at last understood, and sobbed a little, and kissed her father, and went out into the strong, salt air to be alone and understand, if she could, a personality new to her experience.

In the late afternoon of the same day, when the mysterious uncondensed current had told Potter that the Exchange had just closed in unparalleled excitement, and then added the final quotation, the man heaved a deep sigh of relief and rose quickly. The jaws that for three days had snapped together, relaxed gently into a genial and charming smile—a smile such as had but recently been born within a nature broadened and deepened and softened by an overmastering love. The feeling of elation and of victory had already passed. His mind had travelled beyond the smoke and noise of battle. He was thinking of Alice.

"Buster!" he called, "a bottle of champagne!"

It was the time-worn way of celebrating, and Buster was not averse to it.

"Very well, sir."

"No." Mr. Potter came to himself. "Buster, you get out. I don't want you before ten o'clock."

"Very well, sir—and——"

"Well, what?"

"I saw Miss Emory sittin' alone, lookin' awful lonesome, and——"

"That will do," replied his master,

themselves that gentleman glared at the broker viciously.

Potter returned the glance pleasantly enough. At that moment he couldn't have quarrelled with a rattlesnake.



"Miss Alice, won't you ever treat me again?"

Five minutes later, Peleg Potter emerged from his cabin.

He had not gone ten paces before a lurch of the vessel landed him in the arms of a fellow traveller, enveloped in a plaid mackintosh with hat to match. It was Mr. Ananias Eli, and as the two disentangled

"Mr. ——?" questioned Ananias Eli with hauteur.

"Potter—at your service, of the firm of Brooks & Potter—you know them," returned the other with a smile.

"Mr. Peleg Potter?" speculated Eli, his weak jaw taking a sudden droop.

"Oh, yes; you know me well. You went to school with me. The other morning—don't you remember? Paresis—burned arc light at both carbons—awfully good! You remember!"

The poor man paled, but his eyes darkened obstinately. It takes more than a little thing like this to abash a professional globe-trotter. Ananias Eli recovered his aplomb as one would pick up a dropped pencil.

"You—you told me to sell Trans-Atlantic Telegraph, and the confounded stock closed eight points up this afternoon," he stormed. "Why did you take me in like that?"

Mr. Potter smiled.

"If you *can* remember rightly, Mr. Eli, I advised you not to sell, and not to dabble in stocks at all. Didn't I?"

Expression after expression chased itself over Ananias Eli's flabby face, like cat's-paws over a duck pond.

"Well," he admitted, slowly, "that may be, but what do you advise me now?"

"Jump overboard," was Potter's prompt advice, for at that moment, on looking over the liar's head, he discovered a familiar figure far toward the stern, and looking as lonely as a butterfly in mid-ocean.

But Potter strode on. So he came upon her, looking far beyond the shining waters, out upon the boundless, heaving sea.

"Miss Alice," began the broker, bending as low as he dared, "won't you ever trust me again?"

The woman in the girl rose to the wail, for she knew that his words were this time no play nor mockery. Her lips unconsciously uttered her father's protest.

"Don't—don't!" she sobbed. "I can't bear it."

He put out his strong, masterful hand, and took one of hers, and held it in the grip of a late, unalterable love. She could not help but look up into his compelling eyes. Then the two found the sight of each other good, and they gazed long and steadily, with hearts bare and beating. Then Peleg Potter knew he had checkmated fortune, and had won

another victory, compared with which the greatest success on 'Change shone like a firefly in a blazing sun. This time he took both her hands, and this time she did not refuse.

All the world now knows how Peleg Potter fell upon the "shorts" and slaughtered them, and made one of the greatest "killings" of this decade. That is part of the history of the Stock Exchange. But few know how he won his bride, and that no man has a right to tell.

Days later, as the great steamer neared the dock, Mr. Potter stopped the purser, resplendent in lace and importance.

"My dear Sutton," he said, linking arms, "if it were not an impertinence I should like to make you a little present." He fluttered a small sheet of paper with edges on one side half perforated. "You see—you see, I've won everything, hands down—and I want you to share my good fortune, if you will."

Mr. Phineas Sutton took the cheque and examined it coolly, without astonishment. He had never handled such a princely fee before. Then he leisurely tore it up, and tossed the white leaves overboard.

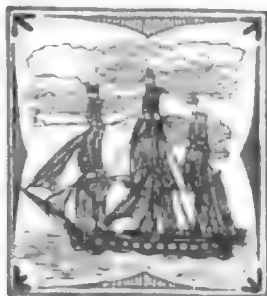
"This is not an insult, Mr. Potter," he said, laughing, "it is a privilege. You see, when that idiot Eli sold Trans-Atlantic Telegraph, I thought I knew my business and I bought. I borrowed every shilling I could lay my hands on—and bought, and bought, and bought. Well—you know the rest. I don't need to work any more now, unless I want to; and it's due to you."

The two men shook hands as men will when talk is superfluous.

"And now Mr. Potter, when you come back a married man—as I suppose you will fast enough—you two shall occupy my cabin—that is, if you don't want to charter the whole ship."

Peleg Potter did not reply. By a bondless system older than Marconi's, and swifter than the "wireless," his thoughts had leaped into the paradise of his future.

THE



END.

THE CHURCH IN THE TOWER.

"IN TRUTH THERE IS NO SADDER SPOT ON EARTH THAN THIS."

—Macaulay.

IT was thus that Macaulay wrote of the Church of St. Peter "Ad Vincula," in the Tower, of whose existence comparatively few, even of those who go frequently to the grim fortress which the little Prince in *Richard III.* was informed was begun by Julius Cæsar, are aware.

The reason for this distinction is supplied in another sentence of the great historian's in which he says :—"Thither have been carried through successive ages by the rude hand of gaolers, without one mourner following, the bleeding relics of men who have been captains of armies, leaders of parties, oracles of senates, and the ornaments of Courts." Even that phrase would hardly give its peculiar pre-eminence to this little Golgotha, as in good truth it is, seeing that within a limited area, probably more bodies have been buried than in any other place, for the dust of fifteen great ones of the earth repose in the chancel in two rows of seven, and one is under the altar chapel itself. All of them died a violent death, and as Stow, the historian, wrote :—"Here lieth before the high altar in St. Peter's Church, two dukes, between two queens, to wit, the Duke of Somerset and the Duke of Northumberland between Queen Anne and Queen Catherine, all four beheaded." That fact alone would make St. Peter "in fetters" distinguished among the churches of the land, even without the additional distinction that it is the only church

dedicated to St. Peter in chains which is to be found outside Rome.

Nor do two queens exhaust the royal possibilities of the spot, for "the nine days Queen" also sleeps her long sleep here, and the grave under the altar holds the remains of the Duke of Monmouth, whose ambition, like that of many whom he followed to that tragic spot, caused his death.

The seven in the first row who are entombed beneath the chancel, are Lord Rochford (the brother of Anne Boleyn), Anne Boleyn, the Duke of Somerset (the Protector), the Duke of Northumberland, Queen Catherine Howard, Lady Rochford and the Countess of Salisbury, while in the second row are Lord Guildford Dudley, Lady Jane Grey, the Duke of Suffolk, the Duke of Norfolk, the Earl of Arundel, the Earl of Essex (Queen Elizabeth's favourite), and Sir Thomas Overbury. A list of those buried here is recorded upon a brass plate on the wall, and there one may read the names, in their order, according to the year in which the illustrious men and women suffered death.



The Church of St. Peter "Ad Vincula" in the Tower—"the saddest spot on earth."

It is interesting to recall in this place that the last burial in the church occurred in 1871, when Sir John Fox Burgoyne, the Constable of the Tower, was interred there.

It is easy to understand now why the Church of St. Peter, which is generally regarded as a Chapel Royal, was thus distinguished by Monks, and that distinction still clings to it, as it will cling to it through the centuries. The reason why so few people know it is that it is not shown to ordinary visitors, who, on the other hand, are quite familiar with the Chapel of St. John in the White Tower, the chapel which is the largest

that of St. Peter as well. Henry and his predecessors used, no doubt, to worship in this church, as did his successors, for it contained a pew or stalls for the Sovereign and his wife; and Henry's letter to the Keeper of the Tower ordered the Royal stalls to be painted, and "the little Mary with her shrine, and the figures of St. Peter, St. Nicholas and St. Katherine to be newly coloured," and an image of the Virgin to be made beyond the altar of St. Peter, on the north side, and another of him, "in archiepiscopal vesture," on the south, "both to be painted in the best colours"; and also



The interior of the Church, showing the altar and the famous organ, the first built by "Father" Schmidt for Charles II., and removed from Whitehall to the Church in the Tower by order of Queen Victoria.

and most complete example of a castle chapel of the Norman period now existing in the country.

St. Peter's Church lies to the north-west of the great White Tower, almost directly opposite the Governor's house. It was probably built by Henry I., or, according to some other authorities, towards the end of the reign of Henry II. The first mention of it, however, occurs in the records of the reign of King John, and it was either completed, or certainly greatly improved, by Henry III., who, not only ordered the Church of St. John to be repaired, but

"to be made and painted in the said church where it could be better and more distinctly done, an image of St. Christopher holding and carrying Jhesus." He also commanded "two fair tables of the best colours, and containing the legends of St. Nicholas and St. Katherine, likewise to be painted on the same altars, and two fair cherubims, with cheerful and pleasant countenances," to be placed on the right and left of the great cross; "a marble font, with marble columns well and distinctly carved," was also to be provided. "And the cost for this," continued the King to the keeper, "you shall be at by the view

and witness of liege men shall be reckoned to you at the Exchequer."

This order shows the estimation in which the church was held by the King in the days before it came by its tragic destination, but this order by no means marked the limit of Henry's beneficence, for after a few years he ordered two small bells to be placed in the church, and when he died a chaplain was appointed to pray for his soul, and for that office he received "fifty shillings a year from the Exchequer," a sum,

be better administered to his officers and servants residing in the Tower." He also made certain additional payments to provide for these new officials, these additions including thirty-one shillings and eightpence from tenements on Tower Hill, and Petty Wales, and "customs duties from stall-boats, weirs and other engines on the Thames, which he had been accustomed to receive by the hands of the Constable of the Tower."

Edward IV. changed the Rector and three Chaplains into a Dean and three Canons,



The Altar in the Church of St. Peter "Ad Vincula." The emeralds indicate the burial places of Queen Anne Boleyn, Queen Catherine Howard and Lady Jane Grey respectively.

it need hardly be said, quite different from what £a. too. would be to-day.

Fifty shillings a year was, in the reigns of Henry III. and Edward I., the general allowance of the King's Chaplains at Windsor, or Winchester and at other royal residences, and the Chaplain of St. Peter continued to receive that sum until 1354, when a yearly rental of sixty shillings, "derived from the premises in Candlewick Street," was granted for his support, and at this time he became known as the "Rector." In this year, too, Edward III. added three chaplains "for the honour of the Holy Church, and that the Sacraments and other Divine services might

one of whom was the Sub-Dean, another the Treasurer and the third the Precentor, and called them "the Dean and Canons of the Royal Free Chapel of the King's Household within the Tower of London," thus giving St. Peter's that character as a Royal Chapel which it enjoys to-day. Up to that time and for the best part of a century after it had also the distinction of being exempt from all episcopal authority, for it was Edward VI. who subjected it to the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the Bishop of London.

During those three centuries of its history, however, the vicissitudes which are the lot of things of earth were not spared it, for it

tablets which commemorate officials of the Tower who are not buried there.

One of the most interesting of the more memorials of the past is a frame on the wall, by the door, containing three leaden plates to the memory of the three Scottish lords, Lord Kilmarnock, Lord Lovat and Lord Balmerino, who were executed in connection with the rebellion of 1745. They were all buried in one grave, and on the stone were cut three marks, a diamond and two ovals, which correspond with the shapes of the leaden plates placed on their coffins. When the graves were opened in 1876, however, neither their remains nor their coffins were to be seen, friendly hands having, no doubt, disinterred them and taken them to some more private place of sepulture. These plates were, however, found.

Certain other interesting tombs and monuments exist in the chapel, notable among them being a large alabaster monument to Sir Richard Cholmondeley and his wife. This used to stand in the middle of the church, but is now against the north-east wall. When it was moved no remains

were found in it, but only some fragments of the old christening font. Sir Richard was the Lieutenant of the Tower in 1518, when the citizens of London rose against the Lombards and other merchant strangers. In order to intimidate the rioters he discharged some of the

artillery of the Tower against the city, but did no damage to life or property, possibly because, knowing what the moral effect of the discharge of the cannon would be on the populace, he did not put any shot into his guns. The figure of Sir Richard is represented in plate armour with a collar of SS, with a pendant attached, around his neck, and his hands joined in prayer, while Lady Cholmondeley wears a pointed head-dress.

On the north wall is a monument to Sirs Richard and Michael Blount and their families. They have the distinction, unique in the history of the fortress, of being the only father and son who held the office of Lieutenant of the Tower, the son being appointed exactly a quarter of a century after the death of his father. Sir Richard is represented, on one side, in armour, with his two sons kneeling, his wife and two



The Tombstone of Queen Anne Boleyn, set into the floor of the chapel.



Leaden Plates to the memory of the three Scottish lords—Kilmarnock, Lovat, and Balmerino—who were executed at the Tower for complicity in the rebellion of 1745.





Nicholas went to the same place, and——"

"Will five guineas be enough?" asked Mr. Atwood, with masculine directness, seeking for some tangible fact.

"Oh, yes. I'm sure it will be, I——"

"Then here's ten pounds," said Mr. Atwood. He selected two five pound notes and pushed them over to her. "Get a good costume while you're about it, Gladys."

"Oh, Edward. I don't want——"

"Make her take it," said a girl of sixteen, rising from the corner where she had been sitting with a book in her hand, a very tall and thin and pretty girl, brunette like her mother, with a long, black braid that hung down her back. She came forward and threw her arm round her mother's neck, bending protectingly over her.

"Make her take it, papa. She buys everything for me and the boys, and goes without herself, so that I'm ashamed to walk out in the street with her, it makes me look so horrid to be all dressed up when she wears that old spring jacket. When it's cold she puts a cape over it. I wish you'd see that cape! She's had it since the year one. She doesn't dare wear it when she goes out with you, she just shivers."

"Hush, hush, Josephine," said the mother, embarrassed, yet laughing, as her husband lifted his shaggy eyebrows at her in mock severity. "You needn't say any more, either of you. I'll take the money." She paused impressively, and then gently pushed the girl aside and went over and kissed her husband.

"If I were only as good a manager as some people! I don't know what's the matter with me. I try, and I try, but——"

"Yes, yes, I know," said the husband. "All I ask now is that you spend this money on yourself; it's not for other needs, remember. You are to spend it all on yourself."

"Yes, I will," said Mrs. Atwood, with the guilty thrill of the perjured at the very moment of her promise. She knew very well that some of it would have to be spent for other needs. She had but two shillings left of her allowance to last her until the end of the month, five long days away. No one but the mother of a family on moderate means realises what the demand for pencils, bootlaces, postage stamps, hair ribbons, medicines, mended boots, and such like can amount to in that short time. She had

meant to ask Edward to advance her a little more on the next month's allowance—already largely anticipated—but she had not the face to do so after his generosity to her now. A half-sovereign out of the ten pounds would make very little difference, and she did not need it all, anyway. She almost wept as she thought of Josephine's championship of her, and her husband's thoughtfulness.

Mrs. Atwood adored her husband and her three children. She firmly believed them to be superior in every way to all other mortals: sacrificing service for them was her joy of joys, her keenest affliction the fear that she did not appreciate them half enough. It is certain that the children, truthful, loving and obedient as they had been trained to be, would have been spoiled beyond tolerance if it were not that the very strength of her admiration made it innocuous. They were so used to being told that they were the loveliest and dearest things on earth that the words were not even heard. As they grew older the extravagance of her devotion was beginning to rouse the protective element in them, to her wonder and humility.

Mrs. Atwood, at twenty, the time of her marriage, had been a warm-hearted, fervent, loquacious, impulsive girl. At thirty-eight she was still in many ways the girl her husband had married, even to her looks, while he appeared much older than his real age, in reality but a couple of years ahead of hers. She was always longing to be a silent, noble, and finely-balanced character, quite oblivious of the fact that she suited him, a humorous, but self-contained man, exactly as she was, and that he would have been very lonesome with anything more perfect. Perhaps, after all, there are few things that are better to bring into a household than an uncalculating and abounding love, even if the manifestations of it are not always of the wisest. The extra money cast a rich glow over Mrs. Atwood's horizon. In the effulgence of it she received a bill for two pounds ten shillings presented to her just after breakfast the next morning by the maid, with the message that the man waiting outside the door had already brought it once before, when they were out of town. Could Mrs. Atwood pay it now? He needed the money.

"Why, certainly," said Mrs. Atwood, with affluent promptness. The bill was for work on the lawn, something her husband always paid for, but it seemed a pity to have the



"How about your costume, Gladys?" asked her husband one evening, as they sat around the fire. "Is it almost finished?"

"Not—exactly," said Mrs. Atwood.

"The Club goes to Scarborough on the fifteenth of the month, it was decided to-day. Nearly all the men are going to take their wives with them. I'm looking forward to showing off mine."

"My mamma will look prettier than any of them," said Eddy belligerently.

"And lots younger," added Sam.

"Have you ordered the costume yet?" asked the voice of Josephine. Oh, how her mother dreaded it!

"No, I haven't—yet," she felt herself forced into saying.

"I don't believe there is any money left for it," pursued the pitiless one. "She spends it for other things, papa. She pays bills and doesn't tell because she hates to bother you. And she buys things for us. And she paid a subscription to the Orphans' Home yesterday, and she got——"

"Hush, hush, Josephine," said her father severely. "I found that receipted bill of Patrick's the other day, Gladys. I should have paid you back at once. How much money have you left?"

"Oh, Edward, I'm *so* foolish, I——"

"Have you five guineas?"

"I—I don't think so."

"Have you four?"

"I haven't *more* than that." She had, as she well knew, the sum of one pound nineteen and sixpence in the purse in her dressing table drawer.

"Will this help you out?" His tone had the business-like quality in it as natural as breathing to a man when he speaks of money matters, and which a woman feels almost as a personal condemnation, in its chill removal from sentiment.

"Oh, Edward, please don't! It makes me feel so——" She tried not to be too abject. "But nearly all of it has gone for necessary things, truly."

"That's all *right*," He added with a touch of severity, "Don't let there be any mistake about it this time, Gladys"; and she murmured contentedly:

"No. No, indeed."

With her allowance money, too, how could there be?

Mrs. Atwood now set herself seriously to the work of getting apparelled. She read advertisements, and she went to town two

days in succession, bringing home samples of cloth for family approval; she sought the advice of her young sister-in-law, Mrs. Calender, and of her friend, Mrs. Nicholas, with the result that she finally sat down one morning immediately after breakfast, and wrote a letter to a firm ordering a jacket and skirt made like one in a catalogue issued by them, and setting down her measurements according to its directions. Just before she finished a maid brought up word that Mrs. Martindale was below.

"Mrs. Martindale—at this time in the morning!"

Mrs. Martindale was her cousin, and lived upon the other side of the road, some distance away. Mrs. Atwood hurried down with a premonition of evil, to find her visitor, a pretty woman, elegantly, but hastily gowned, sitting on the edge of a chair, as if ready for instant flight. There was a wild expression in her eyes.

She began at once, taking no notice of Mrs. Atwood's greeting.

"I suppose you think I'm crazy to come worrying you in this way. I didn't sleep a wink last night. I didn't know what to do. We're in such a state!"

"Is it the business?"

"Oh, it's the estate and the business and everything. Mr. Bellen's death has just brought the whole thing to a standstill. All the money is tied up in some dreadful way—don't ask *me*. Of course, it will be all right in three or four weeks, Dick says, and we have credit everywhere. It's just to tide over this time. But we haven't a penny of ready money; not a *penny*. It would be ridiculous if it weren't horrible. Dick gave me all he could scrape together last week, and told me to try to make it last, but it's all gone—I couldn't help it. And the washer-woman comes to-day. Could you let me have two pounds, dear? I couldn't *bear* to let Dick know."

"Why, certainly," said Mrs. Atwood with loving alacrity. "Don't say another word." If she felt a pang she scorned it.

"You don't know how many calls there are on one," murmured Mrs. Martindale, sinking back in the chair with a sigh of intense relief.

Mrs. Atwood thought she did, but she only said, "You poor thing," and rushed upstairs to get two of her bright sovereigns. She could not use the house money for this. She passed Josephine in the hall on her way

"Well, Gladys, has your costume come home yet?"

It was three nights before the fateful day for the Scarborough trip.

Mr. Atwood, although his hair and moustache were grizzled, and his face prematurely lined, had a curious faculty of suddenly looking like a boy under some pleasurable emotion—anticipation of his holiday made him young for the moment. His wife thought him beautiful.

"Did you say it had not come home yet? You must be sure to have it in time. Take all your party clothes along, too."

"Oh, yes, I'm going to," said Mrs. Atwood. She was on sure ground here. The gown she had made for a wedding some time ago was crying to be worn again.

"What colour did you decide on?"

"I—I decided on—brown," said Mrs. Atwood, with fixed eyes. Her respite was gone.

"Brown—yes, I always liked you in brown. Have you heard your mother talk much about her new clothes, Josephine?"

"No," said Josephine, "I haven't."

"Didn't you wear brown when we went on our wedding trip? It seems to me that I remember that. I know you had red berries in your hat, for I knocked some of them out. But come, what makes you look so unhappy, Gladys? Aren't you glad to go off with me—in a new costume?"

"Edward!" said Mrs. Atwood. She rose and stood in front of him, her dark eyes unnaturally large, the colour coming and going in her rounded olive cheek. Her red lips trembled. "Edward, I have something to tell you."

"There's the door bell," said her husband with an arresting hand, as he listened for the outer sounds.

"A parcel, father. A shilling to pay!" cried Sam, as he ran into the room.

"Have you the change, Gladys? It's some clothes I ordered myself for the Scarborough trip; I wanted to do you credit. Oh, don't go upstairs for it."

"I don't mind," said Mrs. Atwood. Change! She had nothing but change. Clothes! How easy it was for him to get them. Do her credit in his glossy newness, while she was in that old black skirt, grown skimp and askew with wear, and that tight, impossible jacket. She charged up and downstairs in the vehemence of her emotion, filled with anger at her folly, and paid the man herself before re-entering the room.

Her husband was untying the cords of the long pasteboard box with slow and patient fingers. He was a man who never cut a string in his life. The children were standing by in what seemed unnecessary excitement, their faces all turned to her as she came towards them. Edward had lifted the cover of the box.

"What colour are your clothes, Edward?" asked his wife. It was the first time that he had ever bought anything without consulting her.

"What colour? Oh—brown," said Mr. Atwood. He swooped her into a front place in the circle with his long arm. "Here, look at this, Gladys, and tell me what you think of it."

"Edward!"

"Lined throughout with taffeta, gores on every frill, why—bring your mother a chair, Josephine."

Before the eyes of Mrs. Atwood lay the rich folds of a cloth skirt, surmounted by a jacket trimmed with fur.

She lay back in the armchair with the family clustered around her, their tongues loosened.

"We all knew about it." "We promised not to tell." "We wanted to *see* you get it." "There won't be anybody as pretty as you, mamma." "You left out that letter of measurements, and papa and I took it to Aunt Cynthia"—this from Josephine—"and she helped us. She says you're *disgracefully* unselfish." The girl emphasised her remark with a sudden and strangling hug. "There isn't anybody in the *world* as good as you are. I was watching you all last week. I knew you wouldn't buy a *thing*. But it was papa who thought of doing it when I told him. Feel the stuff. Isn't it lovely? So thick and soft. He and Aunt Cynthia said you should have the best. *Don't* you like it, mamma?"

"It's perfectly beautiful," said the mother, her hands clasped in those of her darling's, but her eyes sought her husband's face.

He alone said nothing, but stood regarding her with twinkling eyes through a suspicion of moisture. What did she see in them? The love and kindness that clothed her not only with silk and wool, but with honour; that made of this new raiment a vesture wherein she entered that special and exquisite heaven of the woman whose husband and children rise up and call her blessed.

TRAINING THE OTHER SIDE.

AN INSTRUCTIVE ARTICLE SHOWING HOW THE LEFT HAND AND FOOT MAY BE DEVELOPED AND RENDERED AS SKILFUL AS THE RIGHT LIMBS OF THE BODY.

By EUSTACE MILES,

Amateur Champion at Racquets and at Tennis.



AT first I had thought of calling this article "The Training of the Left Side," and I shall generally speak of the other side as the left side in the rest of this article. But, some people (about two per cent.) appear to be left-handed by nature, and such people will have to develop their right side rather than their left. Moreover, the left leg of most right-handed people is already in some respects more skilful than the right—for example, in starting to run or jump.

This article is a plea for a nearer approach to a balance of skill, a plea for a reasonable culture of the other side, and for a not less, but more reasonable, culture of the side which already excels. It is a plea by one who wishes he had himself had such a culture, that he had known of its importance some twenty-five years ago. Such a man has as much right to speak and to urge what should be done as the man who can already use both sides fairly well, somewhat as on temperance platforms we should demand to hear not merely the preacher who never has been and never is a slave to the liquor habit, but also the man who has been, but is so no longer, and the horrible example who has been and still is. This is not a plea for equal skill with the two sides, but for more nearly equal skill; still less is it a plea that we should use the left side habitually where we now use the right. It is that we should be able to use it moderately well when it is necessary or desirable to do so.

Nor does it treat of the left hand only, but of the left side in general. Too much is made of the hand, too little of the side. We hear a great deal about manual training; indeed, this sometimes has been confused with "Physical Culture." We hear too little

about the training of the trunk. The left hand has been put in the foreground, because man does so much with his hand, or seems to do so much. Man is a handy animal, as distinct from every other animal that one knows of, but he is not nearly so handy an animal as he might be.

In proof of this, let anyone try to use his left hand instead of his right when he brushes his hair, sponges himself in a bath, dries his face, reaches something down from a shelf, peels an apple, writes a letter, draws a face, fences, throws a stone, bowls a cricket ball, or hits a lawn tennis ball.

It is true that the excessive use of the right hand is not found everywhere in life. As instances of employments in which the two hands are exercised more or less equally, one thinks of sewing, a large number of trades, piano-playing, fives, boxing, gymnastics, rowing, and swimming with the breast-stroke. But these two latter exercises have rhythmical and expected movements with the two sides together, as in freehand drawing, in contrast to that sudden demand for a new movement either with one side or with the other which a game like fives demands. I wish to urge the use of the left side as an independent worker.

Is the left side naturally weaker than the right? Dr. J. H. Kellogg, who has the largest health resorts or sanatoria in the world, has proved fairly conclusively that the left side is not much weaker than the right so far as actual weight-lifting power is concerned. He has invented a special machine, which registers the power of different muscles of the body in man and in woman. His table shows that if we represent the *strength* of the muscles of the right side by 100, we shall represent those of the left side by 96, 97, 98, 99 in a large number of cases. In a few cases, as with the thigh-flexors of the left leg, the left is stronger than the right. So it is not want of strength that we have to deal with, but want of skill and control, that is to say, want of proper practice.







THE UNWILLING BURGLAR.

A HUMOROUS STORY.

By E. R. PUNSHON.

Illustrated by WILL OWEN.

MR. WILLIAM TOMPKYNS, Editor of the *Daily Press*, was holding forth at the breakfast table on the dangers of neglected fastenings.

"Three times this year," he complained bitterly, "on my return from the office I have found a window left open."

"I will speak to the servants about it again, dear," said his wife, meekly.

"But nothing has happened, papa," urged Mollie, a vigorous young woman of an independent turn of mind.

"That simply shows your good fortune," said the editor, crushingly. "You must remember, Mollie, and you, too, my dear, that this house is particularly open to attack. Not only are you two women left alone in the house until my late return, but there is my collection of coins."

"Um-m," said Mollie, doubtfully. "I do not think myself that the coin collection would attract the average burglar. He is not, as a rule, possessed of numismatic tastes."

"If it occurs again," continued Mr. Tompkins, severely, "I shall speak to the servants myself."

"Um-m," said his wife, doubtfully, for she had heard that warning before, but had never seen the threat carried into execution.

"I should like to know how you would both feel if burglars did break in while I was away at the office," proceeded Mr. Tompkins. "I'll guarantee that if it did happen you would be very careful indeed to see all the windows fastened for the future. It's the nature of women to lock the stable-door after the horse is stolen."

"If anyone did break in," said Mollie, promptly, "we should sound that electric alarm to the police station, you had installed the other day."

"More likely you would hide your heads under the bed-clothes," he retorted. "If I were in the house to protect you, this carelessness would not be so annoying. If I return some night to find the house ransacked, my coins gone, and you with your throats cut, don't blame me, that's all."

"Really, William," said Mrs. Tompkins, with mild shudders, "I do wish you would not have such horrible ideas."

"If that happened," said Mollie, demurely, "I'm sure it would be very wonderful indeed if we blamed papa."

"You know quite well what I mean," observed Mr. Tompkins with dignity. "I am really tempted to wish that some burglar should break in some night and teach you a lesson that would not be forgotten in a hurry. May I trouble you to pass the salt?"

When Mr. Tompkins returned late that night from his editorial sanctum, his paper safely despatched to press, he had not forgotten the conversation at the breakfast table. Determined to ascertain the real effect of his warning, he went carefully round the house and was supremely disgusted to find the scullery window at least an inch open, offering easy entrance to the house.

"Upon my word, it's really too bad, and after all that I said, too," exclaimed Mr. Tompkins, angrily. "Really, I have a good mind—I have a very good mind indeed—to teach them a lesson they will not forget in a hurry. Yes. They shall be taught the necessity of listening to what I say," he concluded, vehemently.

Without more ado Mr. Tompkins retired to the shelter of some trees near by, took off his coat and, chuckling softly to himself, turned it inside out and then put it on again. He withdrew a large silk muffler from his pocket, and removing his collar and tie, he twisted it round his neck—a proceeding that always makes a startling change in one's appearance. Then it struck him that he must have a mask or he would be recognised at once. This was rather a difficulty, but he was now in no mood to stick at trifles. There had been heavy rain earlier in the night, and remembering an expedient he had heard of somewhere, he gathered up some mud and smeared it over his cheeks. By now he had entered thoroughly into the spirit of the thing and he assured himself, with amusement and with truth, that he could not possibly be recognised.

"This will be a good joke to tell afterwards," he muttered as he finished his preparations. "I must be careful not to frighten them too much," he added with a momentary touch of





"Why," whispered the cracksman, in sudden disgust, "you blessed greeny, you ain't took your boots off. Look alive. Ain't you got no list slippers? No? You're a nice mate for a bloke to 'ave, you are; there's no class about you at all."

He spoke with pained disgust, and the editor thought he saw another opportunity to explain matters.

"My good man, this is my own house. I am Mr. Tompkyns, and have lived here these ten years. If you go quietly——"

"Must be blessed big swag you're after," said the burglar, thoughtfully, "that makes yer so anxious to do this job on your own. And you a blooming amatoor that ought to be proud to work with a bloke like me what's done time in every jug in England. Why, I shouldn't wonder if you ain't never cracked a crib afore?"

"Certainly not," said Mr. Tompkyns, with dignity. "And now what will you take to go, my good man?" he continued, in desperation.

"My share of the swag," was the prompt rejoinder, "and if yer talk so loud as that agin I'll bash yer 'ed in," and the burglar made a vicious cut in the air with his jemmy.

"But," began the editor again, intent on making one last desperate effort, when his companion, as good as his word, aimed at him a heavy blow. Mr. Tompkyns only just avoided it, leaned back, feeling quite faint and ill, and held up one arm to ward off a second blow.

"Don't get scared."

"My good man," said Mr. Tompkyns piteously; "you—you will be hanged, and you will find it most unpleasant."

"You *are* comical to be sure," said the other with intense enjoyment; "only stop yer fooling, or I'll be 'urting you. Now jes' listen; are we to be true mates, so 'elp us, or not? Because if not, I'll bash your 'ed in."

"Oh mates, by all means," said Mr. Tompkyns hastily.

"Then you show the way," was the retort. "As you're so anxious to be on yer own, I s'pose yer know the lay o' things all right?"

Going as quietly as he could, yet with such clumsiness as to produce a muttered threat or two from his companion, Mr. Tompkyns led the way, meekly enough, into his own kitchen.

"'Ere," said the burglar, looking round approvingly, "we'll 'ave a little bit o' somethin'.

I daresay, old cock," he continued, with a playful dig in Mr. Tompkyns' ribs, "as yer've been making love to the cook to find out about the show as you do. So you get out the grub, and look sharp."

Miserably Mr. Tompkyns did as he was told, and watched the man thoroughly enjoy his meal. In spite of repeated urging he refused to have anything himself. Several times Mr. Tompkyns was on the point of raising an alarm and summoning help. Twice he put out his hand to knock over some plates, and once he contemplated felling the burglar with a bottle of stout. But he saw the jemmy lying handy at its master's side, and each time he shrank in fear from the actual deed.

"Now," commented the cracksman when he had finished; "now for this 'ere swag o' yours, and if it ain't something uncommon good, I shall be crooly disappointed. And mind, no dirty games, cos my jemmy, what's in my fist, is most remarkably close to yer skull."

By way of aiding the editor's recollections the burglar dug the latter violently in the small of the back with the tool, and then, at Tompkyns' groan of anguish, growled at him in a vicious undertone for making such a noise. The two entered the dining-room, and under the burglar's supervision, with one or two more references to the jemmy as a stimulant, the unfortunate editor was forced to point out some plate on the sideboard, some notes hidden away in a private drawer, and his wife's store of housekeeping money. The cracksman also expressed condescending approval of two of Mollie's rings which he found on the mantelpiece. Finally, under the influence of more threats, for the burglar persisted in believing that there must be something very valuable in the house to account for his companion's wish to do the job "on his own," Mr. Tompkyns produced a valuable presentation watch, and even began to tremble for the safety of his famous coins.

"It ain't bad," admitted the man; "it ain't at all bad; but what I want to know is what was yer after particular? Something extry good there must be. Come, matey," he continued, persuasively, "I've done fair by you, you do fair by me."

He paused for an answer and then a sudden noise in the passage struck him into silence. He turned with a fierce, threatening gesture to Mr. Tompkyns, who had moved

forward hopefully on hearing the sound. It was repeated and the marauder went on silent feet to the window.

"No go," he muttered; "it's a twenty foot drop and there's peelers all round. It's a ten year stretch, mate. You take my tip and try to get sent to Parkhurst. Portland's just 'orrid."

The door opened and three stalwart policemen entered. Mr. Tompkyns dropped on the sofa, almost crying with relief, and for

"'Ow did you manage to bring off this 'ere, if I may ask, sir?" enquired the prisoner.

"Electric alarm to the station," was the laconic reply.

"Matey," said the burglar, reproachfully, turning to the still prostrate editor, "don't yer reckon as when yer was a-makin' love to that there cook, you might 'ave found out about that, too?"

"Thank God," said the editor, looking up for the first time, "that you've come at last."



"He's much the uglier of the two, only he looks more like a pickpocket than a burglar."

a moment far too overwhelmed for speech. The professional put his hands in his pockets and nodded to them philosophically. "It's a fair cop."

One of the policemen took a pair of handcuffs from his pocket and walked up to the burglar, who held out his hands with the air of a man who sees resistance to be hopeless and as if bored by the repetition of a performance he had already experienced too frequently.

"S'elp me," said the burglar with a stare, "if I ever 'eard of a bloke so glad to be copped afore. But yer always was a comical bloke, and no horror."

"Hands out," said another of the policemen, approaching Tompkyns, and before the unfortunate editor knew what was happening he was neatly and expeditiously handcuffed. He had not found words to protest against this indignity when he heard his wife's voice in the passage outside.

"Have you secured them safely?"

"Yes, ma'am," said the policeman. "Would you like to see 'em?"

"Oh yes, do, mamma," came Mollie's voice, "I would just love to see a real burglar."

Next moment Mr. Tompkins found himself jerked to his feet and pushed to a place by the side of the professional, who was held by one policeman, while another grasped the editor firmly by the back of the neck. As they stood thus his wife and daughter appeared in the doorway.

"'Ere they are, ma'am, got both of 'em," said the sergeant with an air of proud proprietorship. "A good thing, ma'am, if I may say so, that the young lady had the courage to sound the alarm for us. Some ladies, and men, too, for that matter, would have pulled the blankets over their heads and been too frightened to do anything."

"They are two dreadful looking men," said Mollie, blushing prettily at this praise.

"They certainly are—most repulsive," agreed her mother; "do you know them?" she added, turning to the sergeant.

"This one I do, he's done time before," he answered, "but not the other."

He put his fingers under Mr. Tompkins' chin and, to the latter's intense disgust, tilted up his face so as to examine him closely. In his indignation the unfortunate editor tried to protest, but the grip on his neck instantly tightened so that he was nearly choked.

"He's much the uglier of the two," observed Mollie, with an air of dispassionate criticism. "Only he looks more like a pickpocket than a burglar somehow—something small and mean about him."

"Will you take them away, please," said Mrs. Tompkins. "To think, Mollie, that but for your presence of mind your poor father might indeed have found the house robbed when he returned. He ought to be here by now, too."

At a nod from the sergeant, the two policemen impelled their captives, none too gently, towards the door. The burglar went quietly enough, but Mr. Tompkins recognised that now he must speak.

"Jane," he said, "don't you know me? One moment, officer, I can explain everything."

"Very like; but it'll be to the magistrate in the morning. You don't know him, ma'am?"

"Such impertinence—most certainly not." She paused. "But stay—yes—there's

certainly something familiar about him, too"—she continued, hesitatingly—"the voice, I think!"

"Oh, I know," cried Mollie, excitedly, and in his relief Mr. Tompkins decided to double her pocket money. "Don't you remember that horrid dirty man who pretended to be hawking umbrellas, and papa threatened to have him locked up?"

"Very like," observed the sergeant, "they often come spying houses they intend to break into."

"Jane," said Mr. Tompkins in an awful voice, "do you mean to say you don't know your own husband?"

"William!" screamed his wife.

She rushed up to him, stared intently into his countenance, and then flung herself into an arm-chair, laughing and sobbing in a mild attack of hysterics.

"Well, I'm blowed," exclaimed the real burglar in a very aggrieved tone, "he was the genuine article all the time, and me thinkin' 'im such a comical gent, too."

"If you had only listened instead of threatening to murder me," said Mr. Tompkins, "we should both have escaped these very unpleasant proceedings. Perhaps now you will be so kind as to remove these—er—handcuffs," he added to the sergeant.

Some more explanations were required, but Mollie adding her testimony, the stupefied and rather disappointed police released him. With great politeness, Mr. Tompkins escorted them and their prisoner to the door, and then returned upstairs, his soul full of gloomy forebodings as to the probable comments in the evening newspapers.

"I hope you now see," he remarked with much severity to his wife, who had recovered her composure, "the consequences that ensue upon your neglect of the simple precautions I request you to take."

"I am very sorry, dear," said Mrs. Tompkins, "but who would ever have thought that you, William, of all men——"

"You had better return to bed, now," interrupted Mr. Tompkins, hastily. "Mollie, may I ask if you see anything humorous in what has occurred to-night?"

"Nothing at all, papa," answered Mollie, demurely; but to this day she indulges in apparently causeless fits of laughter that invariably make her father glare at her with angry suspicion and mutter something about giggling girls.











the circumstances to have done so. We are also often asked to copy the signatures on to illuminated addresses, because the signatories

the evidence well. You have to be both judge and jury in yourself."

Here are two sets of similarities picked out from the bodies of admitted and disputed handwritings, showing at a glance the expert's methods of comparison. Both have figured in famous suits.

Single signatures which are believed to be forgeries are the most difficult cases for the expert. It is possible for a clever man so to imitate a signature that detection is defied. The late Mr. Inglis had a client in the country whose clerk could imitate his signature so well that the principal himself could not tell the difference.

"This photograph," said Mr. Inglis, "is of part of a French postal order. In France the amount of the order is written in ink by the post office people. This one was made out for 'Un franc.' When it was presented for payment over here it read 'Cent' instead of 'Un.' The Treasury instructed my late father to find out, if possible, how it was done. He gave it to me to test it by photographic enlargement. The result was that a dim mark like 'Un' appeared on the plate, although it was hardly possible to

detect anything on the original. When this—and the other photographs—were presented in court, it came as a thunderbolt to the defence, and practically settled the case."

Handwriting clues occur in so large a proportion of cases for investigation by the police that many detectives are constantly

<i>Taken from forged Cheque</i>	<i>Taken from Balance Sheets</i>
9 9	9 9
7 7	7 7
Cash	Cash
9 (y)	" 7 9 9
p	p
p	p p f

An interesting specimen of the forger's handiwork, showing a few points of similarity between the genuine and the forged documents.

are afraid that they will spoil the work by splutters and blots. In some instances we have been told the signatory would not have known our copy from his own signature.

"Such work is a good initial training for an expert in handwriting, but to be an expert requires in addition the facility to apply the knowledge thus gained in this particular way and also a wise caution and acumen. You need to have a keen eye for detecting the peculiarities of the writings submitted to you for examination and comparison, and an experience and caution to prevent your first impressions carrying your judgment too far. You need to weigh



How a clever forgery was discovered. A French Postal Order was originally made out for "un franc," but when presented for payment the "un" had been altered to "cent." The word "cent" was photographically enlarged, and the sensitive plate revealed the dim outline of the word "un" beneath "cent."

studying and comparing caligraphy, and some attain to the ability of the professional expert in this "profound and difficult art," to

quote Charles Reade again. Although the circumstance may not always have been disclosed in the courts during the trials, many a criminal has first put the police on his track by his tell-tale handwriting, even when he has had this contingency in his mind, and has taken such precautions against it as his wits have suggested. The statement of a concrete case, followed through step by step, will best bring out the potentialities of detection by handwriting; and for this purpose I may select from the scores available the case of James Canham Read, concerning which I may mention some hitherto unpublished facts.

When Florence Dennis was found murdered near Southend, and Read, her lover,

Mr. Baker immediately procured from Read's employers, the London and India Docks Joint Committee, specimens of his handwriting. It was thought to be likely that he would be in communication, if with anyone at all, with his brother Harry Read, and specimens of Harry Read's writing were also procured. Harry Read was watched continually, with the result that he was found to be calling at one or two newspaper shops where letters were taken in for callers. Communication with the proprietors soon established the fact that he was receiving letters addressed—in his own (Harry Read's) handwriting—to himself under the alias of Edwards. These were seen by Mr. Baker and opened as they were delivered.

The letters enclosed proved to be from the murderer, James Read, written in a handwriting the disguise of which was easily penetrated by Mr. Baker's experience in this direction. They were replaced in their envelopes and handed by the shopkeepers to Harry Read when he called from time to time. None of the letters contained any address. Each bore a different postmark—Croydon, Gomshall, Hayward's Heath, Holmwood, Lewes, &c. Each postmark was noted as the letters came, and the times of posting. The following point struck the officer. Not one of the letters was posted very early in the morning, nor very late at night. The clear inference was that Read travelled from

his hiding-place to the towns from which he posted, and back again on the same day. The question arose, therefore, from what railway station could he get to every one of the towns from which he had mailed, and back again in a single day. By a gradual process of elimination, the number was reduced to five, of which Mitcham Junction and Tooting Junction were two. When this conclusion had been

GENUINE.

DISPUTED.

ear feng,
(address)

Henry

Hess. Henry.

Nov 17 1890.

Nov 15 90.

asking

knowledge.

Three.

exceeds

should

sentiment

same

£200. £400.

£300. £100.

for.

ear food

Henry

Nov 17 90

asking

mistake.

Rematter. The.

Exertions: anxiously

should

same same

same: here: there?

£400 £7.10.0 1/2 £12.10.0

for

A disputed document after it has been compared by the handwriting experts with the genuine caligraphy, showing the notes made by the detectives with regard to the differences in the letters.

disappeared, the case was put into the hands of Detective-Inspector Charles Baker, of New Scotland Yard (now the Chief Constable of Hastings).

arrived at, news came to Mr. Baker one day that Harry Read had been seen to post a letter which it was believed he had written at a house in the south of London.

assumed the name of "Talbot" by arrangement with Read. But the handwriting was not identified as Read's without close scrutiny.

London 19. Oct 1891
 J. P. Hyatt Esq
 deputy coroner
 East Surrey

I am writing to say that if you and your satellites fail to bring the murderer of Ellen Donworth alias Ellen Linnell late of 8 Duke Street Westminster Bridge Road to justice, that I am willing to give you such assistance as will bring the murderer to justice, provided your government is willing to pay me £200,000 pounds for my services. No pay unless successful.

A. O. Drien
 detective

So careful had the murderer been, that he wrote his telegrams in plain round-hand or printed characters. But there were certain peculiarities about the round-hand and the printing. Read had once been a cargo clerk at the Albert Docks, entering in his books the brands on cases consigned. Consequently, there was much of his printing available among the entries, such as:—
 Thus the printed telegrams were proved, by the expert to whom they were submitted, to be, as Mr. Baker had felt convinced, in Read's penmanship; and this was one of the strongest links in the chain which led in good time to Read's execution.

In the telegram of May 31, a photograph of which is here reproduced, it will be observed that the printed letter "o" which occurs six times, is distinctly smaller in proportion to the other letters. This peculiarity was found in Read's Customs entry books, where he used print handwriting. In this telegram, too, the top strokes and cross strokes are mostly made with an upward incline—that is, the top strokes of the "f's," "t's" and "e's." There is also a peculiarity in the letter "m" in

the telegram in "Clapham" and "Monday." The central portions look like capital "v's," and are made without raising the pencil, while the first and outside strokes of both "m's" are distinct from the central portions. Further, the cross-bars in the "h" in "Sheerness," the "a" in "Talbot," the "a" in "Clapham," and the "a" in "Monday," run right straight through and project beyond the sides of the letters. It was sworn at the trial that all these peculiarities occurred in Read's Customs entries.

Another miscreant who helped the Crown to hang him by supplying the Treasury with handwriting evidence was Dr. Neill Cream, the poisoner of a number of wretched young women in South London. He wrote letters under various names attempting to blackmail people by charging them or their relatives with the murders. The specimens we give of his admitted and his disguised writing do not need much comment; but the loops in the

I,
 Dr. Neill Cream
 of 103 Lambeth Palace
 Road London S.W. desires to
 acknowledge the receipt of
 two Guineas from Henry
 Vear Esq M.D. of Clapham
 Walden Essex and a similar
 amount from H. W. B. on behalf
 of the Widow and children
 of the late Dr. Wm. W. R. Stanley

Dr. Neill desires also to say
 that these kind donations
 are really the means of keeping
 his poor Woman and her
 children out of the Workhouse

Two letters written by Dr. Neill Cream, the famous black-mailer and murderer. The first letter is in a disguised hand, but in each communication the loops in the small "p's" and the small "t's" with which he starts words are identical.

small "p's" and the small "t's" with which he starts words, in both the admitted and the disputed letters, may be compared with convincing effect.

This silly plan had succeeded ill. The Roundheads must have been on the lookout for Mistress Clemency. They attacked the coach in some force and speedily put an end to all resistance. It was while they were searching for concealed papers or valuables that she had made her escape.

"They will search for you," I said. "We must be out of this place before they surround it, or we are trapped."

I took her by the hand and we hurried through the wood. When we reached the edge I saw that about four hundred yards off lay a great forest of pines, which stretched away far into the distance.

There was no time to be lost. Any moment the enemy might come round this side of the wood, and if they did so before we had crossed that terrible intervening space we were lost.

Hand-in-hand we raced over the grass. Each moment in that perilous passage I dreaded to hear the shout set up that should proclaim the enemy had sighted us.

We reached the shelter of the trees and dropped panting upon a bank, Clemency half swooning for want of breath, and I from loss of blood. Then the sight of several cursed Roundhead pikemen, apparently reconnoitring our hiding-place, fairly scared us back to sensibility.

"Arthur!" cried my cousin, "what shall we do? Surely we are not safe hid in this place?"

I thought of the commission the Queen had entrusted to me, and of the story others would tell over in Paris yonder, that I had failed to execute it out of pique. Well, I would not live to hear that.

"The truth is I am wounded," I told Clemency, "and must do something to stop the bleeding before I go a step further. I should be obliged to thank you, Clemency, if you would turn away for a space. 'Tis but a slight hurt, yet hardly a pleasant sight for you to look upon."

The instant my cousin's back was turned I drew out the Queen's letter—it was but a little packet, wrapped in oilskin—and thrust it into the gash on my shoulder as far as possible. Then I bandaged it with the ruffles torn from off my shirt. It hurt most excruciatingly, but it had to be hidden somewhere, and I could think of no better place.

Hardly was this operation finished, when I heard footsteps. I seized Clemency's hand

and tried to pull her farther back into the wood, but before we were hidden a company of pikemen came into view. They caught sight of us and set up a shout.

Clemency, wild with fright, took to her heels like a startled rabbit, and paying small heed to her steps tripped on her dress and fell. Flight was at an end. I faced round upon our pursuers. They all made for me at once. My guard was beaten down and men attached themselves to every conceivable part of my body. I felt like to a hare in the jaws of the hounds, and was glad to see that our captors used Clemency with more courtesy.

"Steady, my men," cried one in command. "Stand back and let me search the malignant."

He forced his way through those who surrounded me and tore open my doublet. His hand gripped my wounded shoulder. I broke out into a cold sweat with agony and dread of discovery.

As though far off, I saw the fierce faces, the angry eyes of the Parliament soldiers, and Clemency, white as death. The bright sunshine turned blood red and the ground seemed to rise up.

* * *

When I came to myself I was lying on my back on the grass, and a soldier was kicking me in the side. One of the men gave me to drink from a flask.

I was dragged to my feet, and we were marched between our captors to their headquarters, a farmhouse about two miles off.

It was a party of the 6th Regiment who had taken us. My Lord Wharton, who commanded, was absent when we were brought in, and our escort kept us waiting in the entrance gallery until he rode up. An officer met him on the threshold with the news of our capture, and he walked straight over to where I stood beside Clemency, who was seated upon a settee.

"Who are you, sir?" he asked. "What is your name?"

"Arthur Aston, my lord."

"Is Mistress Aston your sister, sir?"

"No, my cousin."

"I see you are both somewhat spent," said the Roundhead. "Therefore I will put a few questions to you at once and have done with it."

We followed him into the big hall, across the flagged floor to the open hearth where burned a great fire of wood.





struggle, for they were stronger than I. I stood still and did my best to keep a steady lip.

I saw my Lord Wharton looking curiously at me, and the stone paving rose and fell like the deck of a ship. Someone said: "Look! he will be down in a minute"—and down I was.

The next thing that I was aware of was that a quantity of strong water was being poured down my throat, and that Clemency was storming at my Lord Wharton right bravely.

"Rebel, traitor, coward"—these were the least words she called him.

Two soldiers picked me up and bore me out of the hall, up some stairs and finally flung me down upon a bed. They left Clemency to tend on me, and she did her best to restore me by dosing me with *aqua vita*, of which there seemed no lack.

As soon as I had the strength, I said:

"For God's sake, cousin, stop crying and help me. I put a letter into this cut on my shoulder, I wanted to hide it from these cursed rebels, and I am half mad with the pain."

Poor Clemency did the best she could, and at last the letter lay wrapped in a handkerchief beneath my pillow.

Now it was during the dressing of my hurt that Clemency caught sight of the ribbon knot that the Queen had been so willing I should take possession of.

"Arthur," said she, trying to speak very indifferently, "who gave you that?"

"A lady," I told her.

"I did not think it would be a gentleman," she replied with a pout. "Are you betrothed to her?"

Now sure I had had enough to sober me, yet I must needs see sport in it to tease Clemency because she was eager in this matter.

"We are not yet betrothed," I told her.

"But who is it, Arthur?"

"That's my affair," said I, and I laughed to see how put out Clemency was. She moved away, and I could tell by her face that she was brooding over the affair. At last she said:

"That letter—is it of great import?"

"If it were not, be pleased to consider if I should have been at such pains to conceal it."

"It is from the Queen?"

"'Tis from the lady of the pink love knot," I said, and I laughed.

Clemency got up. "You are very unkind," she said, and bounced into the inner room and banged the door.

I had not meant to grieve her and was sorry.

I called to her for a time, but she took no heed, and at last I was forced to give up for lack of strength.

In the morning she reappeared. She said naught of our falling out overnight, and I was in too much discomfort to note her bearing towards me very closely.

About noon, my Lord Wharton sent to summon Clemency into the hall. Oddly enough, she showed little dislike for this command.

It was not very long before she returned, accompanied by Lord Wharton and a couple of soldiers.

"From what Mistress Aston hath told me," said my lord, looking fixedly down upon me, "they did not search you so thoroughly as might have been."

Clemency had betrayed me! I started up and snatched out the letter to tear it. But the men were too quick for me. They flung me back, seized my wrists and—well, there's something needed besides the spirit to make a stout resistance.

When he had gotten the letter into his hands, Lord Wharton broke it open eagerly. Then his face fell.

"'Tis in cipher!" he exclaimed.

"But I can read it," cried Clemency.

"The devil take you for a jealous little fool!" I cried. "'Tis from the Queen, and now you have ruined us all."

I lay face downwards and buried my head between my arms. It was very hard. It was true my interposition had availed her nothing, but I had risked my life to save her; I was a prisoner and wounded, and in return she had done me the greatest injury she could.

My Lord Wharton began to urge Clemency to read the letter, and I listened anxiously to hear how much mischief she had power to do us. But to my surprise, instead of reading it she fell a-weeping; nor would she be persuaded to it, not by no means.

At length Wharton lost his temper, and turning on me, snapped out:—

"Mr. Aston, you can understand that this is a matter of importance to us. You are the only means whereby I can bring any pressure to bear upon your cousin, and I give you until to-morrow to bring her to a

Listen, cousin, I have a notion how we may outwit this villain. I will borrow your cloak and a hair-comb or two, and God grant me strength, but I will put a stop to his love-making——"

"But you are so weak. You cannot——"

"I must. I can see no other way out of this pickle. I must kill that Roundhead rat, take the letter and ride into Abingdon for help. If I succeed, our men should be here an hour or so after daybreak, and before our guards have discovered anything amiss. But if I fail—have you any weapon?"

She showed me a tiny poniard.

"That is well. Treasure it; so are you armed against the last extremity."

Eight of the clock was being tolled out from the church-tower hard by. I rose up. Clemency dressed my hair and showed me how to arrange her cloak and hood. Lord! If I had not had graver things to think on I should have laughed to see how like a girl I seemed, clad like this.

"You have no weapon!" said Clemency.

"Be pleased to lend me your bodkin, cousin, and I will remedy that."

I took my boot and, cutting open the sole, pulled out a tiny dagger I had hidden there against some extremity like the present. I was ready.

"One kiss, dear heart," I said. I drew her to me and kissed her upon the lips. She put her arms about my neck.

"God guard you, Arthur, this night. I shall die if you come not back to me."

Nine of the clock!

A man came walking down the passage. Outside the door of our prison he stopped, and then the key turned in the lock. I waited until Clemency was laid down in the bed from which I had risen. Then I opened the door and passed out, closing it quickly behind me.

Boys stood there in the passage. I held out my hand. He gave me the letter without a word, and putting his arm round me drew me along the passage to the door he had spoken of. There were no horses there. Boys bent down until his breath fanned my cheek and whispered:

"Not here. Perchance we should be seen."

I made no answer, and the Roundhead, holding me closely, crept out of the garden. We then walked through an orchard and a field or so. It was a light night, and when I saw a road gleaming white before us I

thought to find the cattle there. But I was mistaken. Boys, his grip on me tightening at every step, led me across the road into a wood. I grew very suspicious, and on entering this dark grove of pines, where was no visible path, I stopped dead.

"Come, my fair one, my turtle," said Boys. "Art weary, my beloved? Love shall refresh thee."

He spoke from habit in a kind of snuffing whine, but beneath this his voice was hoarse with evil passion, and his eager breath burned my cheek.

I thought of Clemency in the power of this brute, and—Lord! how ill I turned!

We walked on for some distance until we reached a small clearing in the wood.

Here Boys stopped, and by a quick movement flung both his arms round about me and pressed me, face to face with him, close against his heavy chest.

"'Tis useless to scream, my beauty," he whispered fiercely, "there is none to hear thee. You are mine now, mine, mine, mine!" He broke off into a laugh enough to curdle one's blood. "Come, I must feed of the fruit of those pretty lips. I am hungry of love, and will be satisfied."

He held me against his body, and throwing his arm round my neck, pressed my lips against his own.

My right arm was free.

"You hound!" I cried, and stabbed him full in the chest. He uttered a hoarse scream of terror, and tried to get away from me, but I stabbed him again and again. He fell, and I fell on top of him, and hardly knowing what I did, I stabbed him yet again until I could stab no more.

Then I rose, and with the dripping knife clutched fast in my hand, stood looking down upon my work, and watched a dark stream well slowly out from the shadow under the slain man's side.

The soft light of the young summer moon fell upon the corpse, upon the half-averted face, which bore an expression of mingled passion and terror horrible to look upon.

The hand of conscience fell heavily upon me. I staggered away and sank down upon the soft pine droppings, feeling suddenly as though all the strength were gone out of me.

Then I bethought me that the time to play the woman was gone by.

I had left Clemency alone, at the mercy of my Lord Wharton, and must send her



























THE RED TRIANGLE

By ARTHUR MORRISON.

Illustrated by
SIDNEY PAGET.

BEING SOME FURTHER CHRONICLES OF MARTIN HEWITT: INVESTIGATOR.

THE CASE OF THE ADMIRALTY CODE.

I.

QUICK on the heels of the case of the Burnt Barn followed the next of the Red Triangle affairs. Indeed, the interval was barely two days. Mr. Victor Peytral, it will be remembered, had declined to reveal to Hewitt the addresses of the two houses in London which he had seen Mayes visit, desiring to think the matter over for a few days first; but before any more could be heard from him, news of another sort was brought by Inspector Plummer.

It may give some clue to the period whereabouts the whole mystery of the Red Triangle began to be cleared up if I say that at the time of Plummer's visit this country was on the very verge of war with a great European State. It is a State with which the present relations of England are of the friendliest description, and, since the dreaded collision was happily averted, there is no need to particularise in the matter now, especially as the name of the country with which we were at variance matters nothing as regards the course of events I am to relate. Though most readers will recognise it at once when I say that the war, had it come to that, would have been a naval war of great magnitude; and that during the time of tension swift but quiet preparations were going forward at all naval depôts, and movements and dispositions of our fleet were arranged that extended to the remotest parts of the ocean.

It was at the height of the excitement, and, as I have said, two days after the return of Hewitt and myself from Throckham, when the case of the Burnt Barn had been disposed of, that Detective-Inspector

Plummer called. I was in Hewitt's office at the time, having, in fact, called in on my way to learn if he had heard any more from Mr. Victor Peytral, for, as may be imagined, I was as eager to penetrate the mystery of the triangle as Hewitt himself—perhaps more so, since Hewitt was a man inured to mysteries. I had hardly had time to learn that Peytral had not yet made up his mind, when Plummer pushed hurriedly into the room.

"Excuse my rushing in like this," he said, "but your lad told me that it was Mr. Brett who was with you, and the matter needs hurry. You've heard no more of that fellow—Myatt, Hunt, Mayes, whatever his name is last—since the barn murder, of course? Has Peytral given you the tip he half promised?"

Hewitt shook his head. "Brett has this moment come to ask the same question," he said. "I have heard nothing."

"I must have it," said Plummer, emphatically. "Do you think he will tell me?"

Hewitt shook his head again. "Scarcely likely," he said. "He's an odd fellow, this Mr. Peytral—a foreigner, with revenge in his blood. I have done him and his daughter some little service, and he told me all his private history; but he seemed even then disposed to keep Mayes to himself and let nobody interfere with his own vengeance. But I will wire if you like. What is it?"

"I'll tell you," said Plummer, pushing the door close behind him. "I'll tell you—in confidence, of course—because you've

seen more of this mysterious rascal than I have, and—equally in confidence, of course—Mr. Brett may have, too, since he's been in several of the cases already. Well, of course, we all know well enough that we want this creature—Mayes, we may as well call him, I suppose, now—for two murders, at least, to say nothing of other things. That's all very well, and we might have got him with time. But now we want him for something else; and it's such a thing that *we must have him at once*, or else"—and Plummer pursed his lips and snapped his fingers significantly. "We can't wait over this. Mr. Hewitt; *we've got to have that man to-day*, if it can be done. And there's more than ordinary depending on it. It's the country this time. The Admiralty telegraphic code has been stolen!"

"By Mayes?"

Plummer shrugged his shoulders. "That's to be proved," he said; "but he was seen leaving the office at about the time the loss occurred, and that's enough to set me after him; and there's not another clue of any sort. Mr. Hewitt, I wish you were in the official service!"

Hewitt smiled. "You flatter me," he said, "as you have done before. But why in this case particularly?"

"It's a case altogether out of the ordinary, and one of a string of such, all of which you have at your fingers' ends. And I don't mind confessing that this man Mayes is a little too big a handful for one—for me, at any rate. I wish you could work with me over this; in fact, in the special circumstances I've a good mind to ask to have you retained, as an exceptional measure. But the thing's urgent, and there's red-tape!"

Hewitt had taken a glance at his desk tablet, which he now flung down.

"I'll do it for love," he said, "if necessary. My appointment list is uncommonly slack just now, and even if it weren't, I'd make a considerable sacrifice rather than be out of this. This fellow Mayes is a dangerous man; and I feel it a point of honour that he shall not continue to escape. Moreover, I have begun to form a certain theory as to the Red Triangle, and all there is at the back of it—a theory I would rather keep to myself till I see a little more, since as it stands it may only strike you as fantastic, and if it is wrong it may lead some of us off the track; but it is a theory I wish to test to the end. So I'm with you,

Plummer, if you'll allow it; and you can make your official application for a special retainer or not, just as you please."

Plummer was plainly delighted.

"Most certainly I will," he said. "Shall I give you the heads of the case, or will you come to the Admiralty and see for yourself?"

"Both, I think," said Hewitt. "But first I will send a telegram to Peytral. Then you can give me the heads of the case as we go along, and I will look at the place for myself. I am in this case heart and soul, pay or no pay—and I expect my friend Brett would like to be in it, too. Is there any objection?"

"Well," Plummer answered, a little doubtfully, "we're glad of outside help, of course, but I'm not sure, officially——"

"Of course you are always glad of outside help," Hewitt interrupted, "and in this case we may possibly find Brett more useful than you think. Consider, now. He has seen a good deal of these cases—as much as you, in fact—but he is the only one of the three of us whom Mayes does not know by sight. Remember, Mayes saw us both in the affair of Mr. Jacob Mason, and he saw you again in the case of the Lever Key—escaped, in fact, because he instantly recognised you. I'll answer for Brett's discretion, and I'm sure he'll be glad to help, even if, for official reasons, you may not find it possible to admit him wholly into your counsels."

Of course I willingly assented, and the conditions understood, Plummer offered no further objection. Hewitt despatched his telegram, and in a very few minutes we were in a cab on the way to the Admiralty.

"This is the way of it," Plummer said. "You will remember that when we lost Mayes at the end of the Lever Key case, I was waiting for him in that city office, with an assistant, and that we only saw him for an instant in the lift. Well, that assistant was a very intelligent man of mine, named Corder—a fellow with a wonderful memory for a face. Now Corder is on another case just now, and we'd put him on, dressed like a loafer, to hang about Whitehall and the neighbourhood, watching for someone we want. Well, this morning there came an urgent message to the Yard from the Admiralty, to ask for a responsible official at once, and I was sent. As I came along I saw Corder lounging about, and of course I took no notice—it would not do for us people from the Yard to recognise each other too readily in the street. But Corder came



position. It would have endangered the case he was on, which is very important; and besides, he didn't realise how much we wanted him for, having only been brought in as an assistant at the tail of our case. Still less did he guess—any more than myself—what I was going to hear at the Admiralty office."

"Still," interrupted Hewitt, "you've got the number of the cab?"

"Here it is," Plummer answered, "and I've already set a man to get hold of the cabman. You'd better note the number—92,873."

Hewitt duly noted the number, and advised me to do the same, in case I should chance to meet the cab during the afternoon; and as we neared our destination Plummer gave us the rest of the case in outline.

"In the office," he said, "I found them in a great state. A copy of the code, or cipher, in which confidential orders and other messages are sent to the fleet all over the world, and in which reports and messages are sent back, had disappeared during the morning. It was in charge of a Mr. Robert Telfer, a clerk of responsibility and undoubted integrity. He kept it in a small iron safe, which is let into the wall of his private room. It was safe when he arrived in the morning, and he immediately used it in order to code a telegram, and locked it in the safe again at 10.20. Two hours later, at 12.20, he went to the safe for it again, in order to de-code a message just received, and it was gone! And the lock of the safe is one that would take hours to pick, I should judge. There isn't a shade of a clue, so far as I can see, except this circumstance of Mayes being seen leaving by Corder—just between Telfer's two visits to the safe, you perceive. And of course there may be nothing in that, except for the character of the man. And that's all there is to go on, as far as I can see. I needn't tell you how important the thing is at a time like this, and how much would be paid for that secret code by a certain foreign Government. We have made hurried arrangements to have certain places watched, and as soon as I have taken you to the office I must rush off and make a few more arrangements still. But here we are."

Mr. Robert Telfer's room was at the side of a long and gloomy corridor on the upper floor, and the door was distinguished merely by a number and the word "Private" painted thereon. We found Mr. Telfer sitting alone,

and plainly in a state of great nervous tension. He was a man of forty or thereabouts, thin, alert, and using a single eye-glass. Plummer introduced us by name, and rapidly explained our business.

"I told you the name of the party I am after, Mr. Telfer," Plummer said, "and I went straight to Mr. Martin Hewitt, as being most likely to have information about him. Mr. Hewitt, whose name you know already, of course, is kind enough, seeing we're in a bad pinch, and pushed for time, to come in and give us all the help he can. Both he and his friend, Mr. Brett, know a good deal of the doings of the person we're after, and their assistance is likely to be of the very greatest value. Do you mind giving Mr. Hewitt any information he may ask? I must rush over to the Yard to put some other inquiries on foot, and to set an observation or two, but I'll be back presently."

"Certainly," Mr. Telfer answered, "I'm only too anxious to give any information whatever, so long as it is nothing departmentally forbidden, which will help to put this horrible matter right. Please ask me anything, and be patient if my answers are not very clear. I have been much overworked lately, as you may imagine, and have had very little sleep; and now this terrible misfortune has upset me completely; for, of course, I am held responsible for that copy of the code, and if it isn't recovered, and quickly, I am ruined—to say nothing, of course, of the far more serious consequences in other directions."

"That is the safe in which it was kept, I presume?" Hewitt said, indicating a small one let into the wall. "May I examine it?"

"Certainly." Mr. Telfer turned and produced the keys from his pocket. "The code was here, lying on this shelf when I needed it this morning at ten. I took it out, used it, returned it to the same place exactly, and locked the safe door. Then I took the draft of the telegram, together with the copy in cipher, into the Controller's room, gave it into safe hands, and returned here."

Hewitt narrowly examined the lock of the safe with his pocket lens. "There are no signs of the lock having been picked," he said, "even if that were possible. As a matter of fact, this is a lock that would take half a day to pick, even with a heavy bag of tools. No, I don't think that was the way

of it. You have no doubt about locking the safe door at 10.20, I suppose, before you went to the Controller's room?"

"No possible doubt whatever. You see, I left the whole bunch of keys hanging in the lock while I coded the telegram. It was a short one, and was soon done. Then I returned the code to its place, locked the safe, and *then* used another key on the bunch to lock a drawer in this desk. I had no occasion to go to the safe again till about 12.20, when the Controller's secretary came here with a telegram to be de-coded. The safe was still locked then, but when it was opened the code was gone."

"You had had no occasion to go to the safe in the meantime?"

"None at all. I locked it at 10.20, and I unlocked it two hours later, and that was all."

"You were not in the room the whole of the time, of course?"

"Oh, no. I have told you that at 10.20 I went to the Controller's room, and after that I went out two or three times on one occasion or another. But each time I locked the door of the room."

"Oh, you did? That is important. And you took all your keys with you, I presume?"

"Yes, all. The keys on the bunch I took in my pocket, of course, and the room door key I also took. There are one or two rather important papers on my desk, you see, and anybody from the corridor might come in if the door were left unlocked."

"The lock of the door would be a good deal easier to pick than that of the safe," Hewitt observed, after examining it. "But that would be of no great use with the safe locked. Shortly, then, the facts are these. You locked the code away safely at 10.20, you left the room two or three times, but each time the door, as well as the safe, was locked, and the keys in your pocket; and then, at 12.20, or two hours exactly after the code had been put safely away, you opened the safe again in presence of the Controller's secretary, and the code had vanished. That is the whole matter in brief, I take it?"

"Precisely." Mr. Telfer was pallid and bewildered. "It seems a total impossibility," he said; "a total, absolute, physical impossibility; but there it is."

"But as no such thing as a physical impossibility ever happens," Hewitt replied calmly, "we must look further. Now, are there any other ways into this room than by

that door into the corridor? I see another door here. What is that?"

"That door has been locked for ages. The room on the other side is one like this, with a door in the corridor; it is used chiefly to store old documents of no great importance, and I believe that whole stacks of them, in bundles, are piled against the other side of that same door. We will send for the key and see, if you like."

The key was sent for, and the door from the corridor opened. As Telfer had led us to expect, the place was full of old papers in bundles and parcels, thick with ancient dust, and these things were piled high against the door next his room, and plainly had not been disturbed for months, or even years.

"There remains the skylight," said Hewitt, "for I perceive, Mr. Telfer, that your room is lighted from above, and has no window; while the grate is a register. There seems to be no opening in that skylight but the revolving ventilator. Am I right?"

"Quite so. There is no getting in by the skylight without breaking it, and, as you see, it has not been broken. Certainly there are men on the roof repairing the leads, but it is plain enough that nobody has come that way. The thing is wholly inexplicable."

"At present, yes," Hewitt said, musingly. He stood for a few moments in deep thought.

"Plummer is longer away than I expected," he said presently. "By the way, what was the external appearance of the missing code?"

"It was nothing but a sort of thin manuscript book, made of a few sheets of foolscap size, sewn in a cover of thickish grey paper. I left it in the safe doubled lengthwise, and tied with tape in the middle."

"Its loss is a very serious thing, of course?"

"Oh, terribly, terribly serious, Mr. Hewitt," Telfer replied, despairingly. "I am responsible, and it will put an end to my career, of course. But the consequences to the country are more important, and they may be disastrous—enormously so. A great sum would be paid for that code on the Continent, I need hardly say."

"But now that you know it is taken, surely the code can be changed?"

"It's not so easy as it seems, Mr. Hewitt," Telfer answered, shaking his head. "It means time, and I needn't tell you that with



of the office we had just left. "I'll tell you about it in the cab."

As soon as our cab was started on its way back to Hewitt's office, Plummer explained himself.

"He's been watched," he said, "has Mr. Telfer, when he didn't know it; and he'll be watched again for the rest of to-day, as I've arranged. What's more, he won't be allowed to leave the office this evening till I have seen him again, or sent a message. No need to frighten him too soon—it mightn't suit us. But he's in it, alone or in company!"

"How do you know?"

"I'll tell you. It seems the lead roofs are being repaired at the Admiralty, and the plumbers are walking about where they like. Now I needn't tell you I've had a man or two fishing about among the doorkeepers and so on at the Admiralty, and one of them found a plumber he knew slightly, working on the roof. That plumber happens to be no fool—a bit smarter than the detective-constable, it seems to me, in fact. Anyhow, he seems to have got more out of my man than my man got out of him; and soon after I reached the Yard he turned up, asking to see me. He said he'd heard that a valuable paper was missing (he didn't know what) from the room with the skylight, on the top-floor, where the gentleman with the single eye-glass was, and where the safe was let in the wall; and he wanted to know what would be the reward for anybody giving information about it. Of course I couldn't make any promise, and I gave him to understand that he would have to leave the amount of the reward to the authorities, if his information was worth anything; also, that we were getting to work fast, and that if he wished to be first to give information he'd better be quick about it; but I promised to make a special report of his name and what he had to say if it were useful. And it will be, or I'm vastly mistaken! For just you see here. Our friend, Mr. Telfer, says he put that code safely away at 10.20 in the safe, and that he never went to the safe again till 12.20, when the Controller's secretary was with him; never went to it for anything whatever, observe. Well, the plumber happened to be near the skylight at half-past eleven, and he is prepared to swear that he saw Mr. Telfer—'the gent with the eye-glass,' as he calls him—go to the safe, unlock it, take out a grey paper, folded lengthwise, with red tape round it, re-lock the safe, and carry that paper out into the

corridor! The plumber was kneeling by a brazier, it seems, which was close by the skylight, and he is so certain of the time because he was regulating his watch by Westminster Hall clock, and compared it when the half-hour struck, which was just while Telfer was absent in the corridor with the paper. He was only gone a second or two, and you will remember that Corder saw Mayes leaving the premises within two minutes of that time!"

"Yes."

"Well, Telfer was back in a second or two *without the paper*, and went on with his affairs as before. That's pretty striking, eh?"

"Yes," Hewitt answered thoughtfully, "it is."

"It was a sort of shot in the dark on the part of the plumber, for he knew nothing else—nothing about Telfer legitimately having the keys of the safe, nor any of the particulars we have been told. He merely knew that a paper was missing, and having seen a paper taken out of the safe he got it into his head that he had possibly witnessed the theft; and he kept his knowledge to himself till he could see somebody in authority. Mighty keen, too, about a reward!"

"And now you are having Telfer supervised?"

"I am. Not that we're likely to get the code from him; that's passed out, sure enough, in Mayes's hands—or else his pockets."

To this confident expression of opinion Hewitt offered no reply, and presently we alighted at his office, eager to learn if Mr. Peytral had given the information Hewitt so much desired. Sure enough, a telegram was there, and it ran thus:—

On the night you know of, Mayes went first to 37, Raven Street, Blackfriars, then to S, Norbury Row, Barbican. Message follows.

"Now we're at work," Hewitt said, briskly, "and for a while we part. I shall make a few changes of dress, and go to take a look at 37, Raven Street, Blackfriars. Will you two go on to Norbury Row? You'll have to be careful, Plummer, and not show yourself. That is where Brett will be useful, since he isn't known; if anybody is to be seen let it be he. I shall be very careful myself—though I shall have some little disguise; and I fancy I shall not be so likely to be seen as you."

"What are we to do?" I asked.

"Well, of course, if you see Mayes in the open, grab him instantly. I needn't tell Plummer *that*. I think Plummer would naturally seize him on the spot, rush him off to the nearest station and go back with enough men to clear out No. 8, Norbury Row. If you don't see him you'll keep an observation, according to Plummer's discretion. But, unless some exceptional chance occurs, I hope you won't go rushing in till we communicate with each other—we must work together, and I may have news. My instinct seems to tell me that yours is the right end of the stick, at Barbican. But we must neglect nothing, and that is why I want you to hold on there while I make the necessary examination at the other end. Do you know this Norbury Row, Plummer?"

"I think I know every street and alley in the City," Plummer answered. "There's a very good publican at the corner of Norbury Row, who's been useful to the police a score of times. He keeps his eyes open, and I shall be surprised if he can't give us *some* information about No. 8, anyhow. Moon's his name, and the house is 'The Compasses.' I shall go there first. And if you've any message to send, send it through him. I'll tell him."

On the stairs Plummer and I encountered another of his assistants. "I've got the cab, sir," he reported. "Waiting outside now. Took up a fare in Whitehall, opposite the Admiralty, and drove him to Charterhouse Street; got down just by the Meat Market. That's all the man seems to know."

Plummer questioned the cabman, and found that as a matter of fact that was all he did know. So, telling him to wait to take us our little journey, we returned and reported this information to Hewitt.

"Just as I expected," he said, quietly. "He stopped the cab a bit short of his destination, of course—just as you will, no doubt. There's not a great deal in the evidence, but it confirms my idea."

II.

We followed Mayes's example by stopping the cab in Charterhouse Street, and walking the short remaining distance to Barbican. Norbury Row was an obscure street behind it, at the corner of which stood "The Compasses," the public-house which Plummer had mentioned. We did not

venture to show ourselves in Norbury Row, but hastened into the nearest door of "The Compasses," which chanced to be that of the private bar.

A stout, red-faced, slow-moving man with one eye and a black patch stood behind the bar. Plummer lifted his finger and pointed quickly toward the bar-parlour; and at the signal the one-eyed man turned with great deliberation and pulled a catch which released the door of that apartment, close at our elbows. We stepped quickly within, and presently the one-eyed man came rolling in by the other door.

"Well, good art'noon, Mr. Plummer, sir," he said, with a long intonation and a wheeze. "Good art'noon, sir. You've bin a stranger lately."

"Good afternoon, Mr. Moon," Plummer answered, briskly. "We've come for a little information, my friend and I, which I'm sure you'll give us if you can."

"All the years I've been knowed to the p'lice," answered Mr. Moon, slower and wheezier as he went on, "I've allus give 'em all the information I could, an' that's a fact. Ain't it, Mr. Plummer?"

"Yes, of course, and we don't forget it. What we want now——"

"Allus tells 'em what—ever I knows," rumbled Mr. Moon, turning to me, "allus; an' glad to do it, too. 'Cos why? Ain't they the p'lice? Very well then, I tells 'em. Allus tells 'em!"

Plummer waited patiently while Mr. Moon stared solemnly at me after this speech. Then, when the patch slowly turned in my direction and the eye in his, he resumed: "We want to know if you know anything about No. 8, Norbury Row?"

"Number eight," Mr. Moon mused, gazing abstractedly out of the window; "num—ber eight. Ground-floor, Stevens, packing-case maker; first-floor, Hutt, agent in fancy-goods; second-floor, dunno. Name o' Richardson, bookbinder, on the door, but that's bin there five or six year now, and it ain't the same tenant. Richardson's dead, an' this one don't bind no books as I can see. I don't even remember seein' him *very* often. Tallish, darkish sort o' gent he is, and don't seem to have many visitors. Well, then there's the top-floor—but I s'pose it's the same tenant. Richardson used to have it for his workshop. That's all."

"Have you got a window we can watch it from?"



other side of the way, keeping close to the houses, so as to escape observation from the upper windows. He took a good look at the names on the door-post of No. 8, and presently stepped within.

I waited five or six minutes, and then saw him returning as he had come.

"It's the top floors we want," he said, when he rejoined me in Mr. Moon's sitting-room. "The packing-case maker is genuine enough, and very busy. So is the fancy-goods agent. I went in, seeing the door wide open, and found the agent, a little, shop-walkery sort of chap, hard at work with his clerk among piles of cardboard boxes. I wouldn't go further, in case I were spotted. Do you think you'd be cool enough to do it without arousing suspicion? Mayes doesn't know you, you see. What do you think? We don't want to precipitate matters till we hear from Hewitt, but on the other hand I don't want to sit still as long as anything can be ascertained. You might ask a question about bookbinding."

"Of course," I said. "If you will let me I'll go at once—glad of the chance to get a peep. I'll bespeak a quotation for binding and lettering a thousand octavos in paste grain, on behalf of some convenient firm of publishers. That would be technical enough, I think?"

I took my hat and walked out as Plummer had done, though, of course, I approached the door of No. 8 with less caution. The packing-case maker's men were hammering away merrily, and as I mounted the stairs I saw the little fancy-goods agent among his cardboard boxes, just as Plummer had said. The upper part of the house was a silent contrast to the busy lower floors, and as I arrived at the next landing I was surprised to see the door ajar.

I pushed boldly in, and found myself alone in a good-sized room plainly fitted as an office. There were two windows looking on the street, and one at the back, more than half-concealed behind a ground glass partition or screen. I stepped across and looked out of this window. It looked on a narrow space, or well, of plain brick wall, containing nothing but a ladder, standing in one corner. And the only other window giving on this narrow square space was in the opposite wall, but much lower, on the ground level.

I saw these things in a single glance, and then turned, to find myself face to face with

a tallish, thin, active man, with a pale, shaven, ascetic face, dark hair, and astonishingly quick, glittering black eyes. He stood just within the office door, to which he must have come without a sound, looking at me with a mechanical smile of enquiry, while his eyes searched me with a portentous keenness.

"Oh," I said, with the best assumption of carelessness I could command, "I was looking for you, Mr. Richardson. Do you care to give a quotation for binding at per thousand crown octavo volumes in paste grain, plain, with lettering on back?"

"No," answered the man with the eyes, "I don't; I'm afraid my carelessness has led you into a mistake. I am not Richardson the bookbinder. He was my predecessor in this office, and I have neglected to paint out his name on the door-post."

I hastened to apologise. "I am sorry to have intruded," I said. "I found the door ajar and so came in. You see, the publishing season is beginning, and our regular binders are full of work, so that we have to look elsewhere. Good-day!"

"Good-day," the keen man responded, turning to allow me to pass through the door. "I'm sorry I cannot be of service to you—on this occasion."

From first to last his eyes had never ceased to search me, and now as I descended the stairs I could *feel* that they were fixed on me still.

I took a turn about the houses, in order not to be observed going direct to "The Compasses," and entered that house by way of the private bar, as before.

"That is Mayes, and no other," said Plummer, when I had made my report and described the man with the eyes. "I've seen him twice, once with his beard and once without. The question now is, whether we hadn't best sail in straight away and collar him. But there's the window at the back, and a ladder, I think you said. Can he reach it?"

"I think he might."

"And perhaps there's the roof, since he's got the top floor, too. Not good enough without some men to surround the house. We must go gingerly over this. One thing to find out is, what is the building behind? Ah, how I wish Mr. Hewitt were here now! If we don't hear from him soon we must send a message. But we mustn't lose sight of No. 8."

There was a thump at the sitting-room door, and Mr. Moon came puffing in and shouldered himself confidentially against Plummer.

"Bloke downstairs wants to see you," he said in a hoarse grunt that was meant for a loud whisper. "Twigged you outside, I think, an' says he's got somethink pertickler to tell yer. I believe 'e's a 'nark'; I see him with one o' your chaps the other day."

"I'll go," Plummer said to me hurriedly. "Plainly somebody's spotted me in the street, and I may as well hear him."

I knew very well, of course, what Moon meant by a "nark." A "nark" is an informer, a spy among criminals who sells the police whatever information he can scrape up. Could it be possible that this man had anything to tell about Mayes? It was scarcely likely, and I made up my mind that Plummer was merely being detained by some tale of a petty local crime.

But in a few minutes he returned with news of import. "This fellow is most valuable," he said. "He knows a lot about Mayes, whom, of course, he calls by another name; but the identity's certain. He saw me looking in at No. 8, he says, and guessed I must be after him. He seems to have wondered at Mayes's mysterious movements for a long time, and so kept his eye on him and made enquiries. It seems that Mayes sometimes uses a back way, through the window you saw on the opposite side of the little area, by way of that ladder you mentioned. It's quite plain this fellow knows something, from the particulars about that ladder. He wants half-a-sovereign to show me the way through a stable passage behind and point out where our man can be trapped to a certainty. It'll be a cheap ten shillingsworth, and we mustn't waste time. If Hewitt comes, tell him not to move till I come back or send a message, which I can easily do by this chap I'm going with. And be sure to keep your eye on the front door of No. 8 while I'm gone."

The thing had begun to grow exciting, and the fascination of the pursuit took full possession of my imagination. I saw Plummer pass across the end of the street in company with a shuffling, out-at-elbows-looking man with dirty brown whiskers, and I set myself to watch the door of the staircase by the packing-case maker's with redoubled attention, hoping fervently that Mayes might emerge, and so give me the

opportunity of capping the extraordinary series of occurrences connected with the Red Triangle by myself seizing and handing him over to the police.

So I waited and watched for something near another quarter-of-an-hour. Then there came another thump at the door, and once more I beheld Mr. Moon.

"Man askin' for you in the bar, sir," he said.

"Asking for me?" I asked, a little astonished. "By name?"

"'Mr. Brett,' 'e said, sir. He's the same chap, you know. He's got a message from Inspector Plummer, 'e says."

"May he come up here?" I asked, mindful of maintaining my watch.

"Certainly sir, if you like. I'll bring him."

Presently the shuffling man with the dirty whiskers presented himself. He was a shifty, villainous-looking fellow of middle height, looking a "nark" all over. He pulled off his cap and delivered his message in a rum-scented whisper. "Inspector Plummer says the front way don't matter now," he said. "'E can cop 'im fair the other way if you'll go round to him at once. But if Mr. Martin Hewitt's here 'e'd rather 'ave 'im."

Naturally, I thought, Plummer would prefer Hewitt; but in this case I should for once be ahead of my friend, and have the pleasure of relating the circumstances of the capture to him instead of listening, as usual, to his own quiet explanations of the manner in which the case had been brought to a successful issue. So I took my hat and went.

"Best let me go in front," whispered the "nark." "You bein' a toff might be noticed." It was a reasonable precaution, and I followed him accordingly.

We went a little way down Barbican, and presently, taking a very narrow turning, plunged into a cluster of alleys, through which, however, I could plainly perceive that our way lay in the direction of the back of the house in Norbury Row. At length my guide stopped at what seemed a stable yard, pushed open a wicket gate, and went in, keeping the gate open for me to follow.

It was, indeed, a stable yard, littered with much straw, which the "nark" carefully picked to walk on as noiselessly as possible, motioning me to do the same. It was a

small enough yard, and dark, and when my guide very carefully opened the door of a stable I saw that that was darker still.

He pushed the door wide so as to let a little light fall on another door which I now perceived in the brick wall which formed the side of the stable. After listening intently for a moment at this door, the guide stepped back and favoured me with another puff of rum and a whisper. "There's no light in that there passage," he said, "an' we'd better not strike one. I'll catch hold o' your hand."

He pulled the stable door to, and took me by the hand. I heard the inner door open quietly, and we stepped cautiously forward. We had gone some five or six yards in the darkness when I felt something cold touch the wrist of the hand by which I was being led. There was a loud click, my hand was dropped, and I felt my wrist held fast, while I could hear my late guide shuffling away in the darkness.

I could not guess whether to cry out or remain quiet. I called after the man in a loud whisper, but got no answer. I used my other hand to feel at my right wrist, and found that it was clipped in one of a pair of handcuffs, the other being locked in a staple in the wall. I tugged my hardest to loosen this staple, but it held firm. The thing had been so sudden and stealthy that I scarcely had time to realise that I was in serious danger, and that, doubtless, Plummer had preceded me, when a light appeared at an angle ahead. It turned the corner, and I perceived, coming towards me, carrying a lamp, the pale man of the eyes, whom I had encountered not an hour before—in a word, Mayes.

His eyes searched me still, but he approached me with a curiously polite smile.

"No, Mr. Brett," he said, "my name is not Richardson, and I am not a bookbinder. Not that I am particular about such a thing as a name, for you have heard of me under more than one already, and you are quite at liberty to call me Richardson if you like. I am sorry to have to talk to you in this uncomfortable place, but the circumstances are exceptional. But, at least, I should give you a chair."

He stepped back a little way and pressed a bell-button. Presently the fellow who had decoyed me there appeared, and Mayes ordered him to bring me a chair at once,

which he did, with stolid obedience. I sat in it, so that my wrist rested at somewhere near the level of my shoulder.

"Mr. Brett," Mayes pursued, when his man was gone, "I am not so implacable a person as you perhaps believe me; in fact, I can assure you that my disposition is most friendly."

"Then unfasten this handcuff," I said.

"I am sorry that that is a little precaution I find it necessary to take till we understand each other better. I am glad to see you, Mr. Brett, though I am sure you will not think me rude if I say that I should have preferred Mr. Martin Hewitt in your place. But perhaps his turn will come later. I have a proposition to make, Mr. Brett. I should like you to join me."

"To join you?"

"Exactly." He nodded pleasantly. "You needn't shrink; I shan't ask you to do anything vulgar, or even anything that, with your present prejudices, you might consider actively criminal. You can help me, you see, in your own profession as a journalist; and in other ways. And my enterprise is greater than you may imagine. Join me, and you shall be a great man in an entirely new sphere. A small matter of initiation is necessary, and that is all. You have only to consent to that."

"You seem reluctant. Well, perhaps it is natural, in your present ignorance. This is no vulgar criminal organisation that I have, understand. I have taken certain measures to provide myself with the necessary tools in the shape of money, and so forth, but my aims are larger than you suspect—perhaps larger than you can understand. And I work with a means more wonderful than you have experience of. For instance, here is to-day's work. You know about the lost Naval code, of course—it is what you came about. That document is now lying in the desk you stood by in the room where we spoke of paste-grain book-covers and the like. It was there then, at your elbow. It will be sold for many thousands of pounds by to-morrow, and all the puny watchings and dodgings that have been devised cannot prevent it. The money will go to aid me in the attainment of that power which you may have a part of, if you wish. The means of attaining this I scruple no more about than you did to-day about the story of the book-bindings." He bowed with a slight smile and went on:



will say the pen, or the sword, or love, or what not. Men of the world will say, money and lies: and they will be very nearly right. Money and lies will move continents, but I have one greater power still—the very apex of the triangle! That power I revealed to Jacob Mason. He thought to betray it and it killed him. That power I will reveal to you, if you will accept the alternative I offer.”

“The alternative?”

“Yes, the alternative, for an alternative it is, of course. If you will go through the form of initiation, I shall keep you here a little till I can trust you—which will be very soon. But if not—well, Mr. Brett, I wish to be as friendly as you please, but having been at the trouble of catching you, and having got you here safely, you who know so much now, you who could be so dangerous if you ever got away—eh? Well, you know my methods, and you have seen them exemplified, and you will understand.”

There was no anger in his voice as he uttered this threat, nor even, I thought, in his eyes. But what there was was worse.

“But I’m sure you will not make things unpleasant,” he concluded. “You will go through the little form I have arranged, if only for curiosity. Just think over it for a moment, while I go to close my little office.”

He took the lamp and turned away, but as he reached the angle of the passage, there came a sound that checked his steps. I could hear a noise of feet and hurried voices, and then suddenly arose a shout in a voice which seemed to be Plummer’s. “Here!” it cried. “Help! This way, Hewitt, Brett!”

I shouted back at the top of my voice, wondering where Plummer was, and what it all might mean. And with that Mayes turned, and I saw that he was about to make for the door I had entered by. I resolved he should not pass me if I could prevent it, and I sprang up and seized my chair in my left hand, shouting aloud for help as I did so.

Mayes came with a bound, and flung his lighted lamp full at my head. It struck the chair and smashed to a thousand pieces, and in that instant of time Mayes was on me. Plainly he had no weapon, or he would have used it; but I was at disadvantage enough, with my right wrist chained to the wall. I clung with all my might, and endeavoured to swing my enemy round against the wall in order that I might clasp my hands about him, and I shouted my loudest as I did it. But the chair and the broken glass hampered

me, and Mayes was desperate. The agony in my right wrist was unbearable, and just as I was conscious of a rush of approaching feet a heavy blow took me full in the face, and I felt Mayes rush over me while I fell and hung from the wrist.

I had a stunned sense of lights and voices and general confusion, and then I remembered nothing.

III.

I came to myself on the floor of a lighted room, with Hewitt’s face over mine. My wrist seemed broken, there was oil and blood on my clothes, in my left hand I still gripped a piece of Mayes’s coat.

“Stop him!” I cried. “He’s gone by the stable! Have they got him?”

“No good, Brett,” Hewitt answered soberly. “You did your best, but he’s gone, and Peytral after him!”

“Peytral?”

“Yes. He brought his own message to town. But see if you can stand up.”

I was well enough able to do that, and, indeed, I had only fainted from the pain of the strain on my wrist. Several policemen were in the room, besides Hewitt and Plummer. Mayes’s stronghold was in the hands of his enemies.

Then I suddenly remembered.

“The Admiralty code!” I cried. “It was in the office desk. Have you got it?”

“No,” Hewitt answered. “Come, Plummer, up the ladder!”

Little time was lost in forcing Mayes’s desk, and there the document was found, grey cover, red tape and all intact. The police were left to make a vigorous search for any possible copy, and the original was handed to Plummer, as chief representative present of the law. He had been trapped precisely as I had been, except that he had been led further, and shut in a cellar as well as fastened by the wrist. Mayes, it seemed, had wasted very little time in attempting to pervert him, and I have no doubt that, whatever fate might have been reserved for me, Plummer would never have left the place alive had it not been for the timely irruption of Hewitt, with Peytral and the police.

The dirty-whiskered man made no attempt to escape, though there was talk of another man having got away in the confusion by way of the stable roof. The police were left in charge of the place, and we deferred explanation till the next day.



disappearances of Plummer and myself, and of our continued absence, struck Hewitt as suspicious, and he instantly procured help from the nearest station, and getting no answer to knocks, broke in the door of Mayes's office. It was unoccupied, but the ladder was still standing by which Mayes had descended to the back premises, and down this ladder Hewitt went, with the police after him. The rest I have told.

"But what," I said, "what is this mystery? Why did Telfer give up the code, and what is the power that Mayes talks of?"

"It is a power," replied Hewitt, "that I have suspected for some time, and now I am quite sure of it. A secret, dangerous and terrible power which I have encountered before, though never before have I known its possibilities carried so far. It is hypnotism!"

"Hypnotism!" I exclaimed. "But can a person be hypnotised against his will?"

"In a sense, and in most cases, he cannot. That is the explanation of Mayes's proposals to you to go through a 'form of initiation.' If you had consented, the 'form' would have been a process of hypnotism. Once or twice repeated, and you would have been wholly under his control, so that if he willed it and forbade you, you could tell nothing of what he wished kept secret, and you would have committed any crime he might suggest. Consider poor Jacob Mason! Remember how he struggled to tell what he knew, oppressed by the horror of it, and how it all ended! And remember Henning the clerk, Mayes's tool in that case of bond robbery! What has happened to him? He committed suicide, as you know, immediately after Mayes had left him at the barn. Brett, this power of hypnotism, a power for healing in the hands of a good man, may become a terrible power for evil in the hands of a villain!"

"But Telfer, to-day? He seems to have known nothing of Mayes, and he was not

one of his regular creatures, as Mayes himself told me."

"About that I don't know. But I expect we shall find that he has been willingly hypnotised at some time or another, perhaps more than once, by this same scoundrel Mayes. Possibly in one of Mayes's appearances in respectable society, at an evening party, or the like. In a case of that sort the hypnotist may impress a certain formula—a word, a name, or a number—on the subject's mind, by the repetition of which, at any future time, that same subject may be instantly hypnotised. So that, once having become hypnotised, on any innocent occasion, the subject is in the power of the hypnotist, more or less, ever after. The hypnotist says: 'When I repeat such and such a sentence or number to you in future, you will be hypnotised,' and hypnotised the subject duly is, instantly. Supposing such a case in this matter of Mr. Telfer, it would only be necessary for Mayes to meet him in the corridor, repeat his formula, and command the victim to bring out the paper he specified. This done he could similarly order him to *forget the whole transaction*, and this the victim would do, infallibly."

It is only necessary to say here, parenthetically, that later inquiry proved the truth of Hewitt's supposition. Twice or three times Mr. Telfer had been hypnotised in a friend's chambers, by a plausible tall man whose acquaintance his host had made at some public scientific gathering. And in the end it became possible to identify this man with Mayes.

Mr. Moon, of "The Compasses," was of great comfort to me that evening. My cuts and bruises were washed in his house, and my inner man revived with his food and drink.

"Allus glad to oblige the p'lice," said Mr. Moon; "allus. 'Cos why? Ain't they the p'lice? Very well then."



ANOTHER INVESTIGATION

OF

"THE RED TRIANGLE"

NEXT MONTH.



CAN YOU EXPLAIN IT?

TRUE STORIES OF THE GHOST WORLD.

By W. J. WINTLE.

IT is the fashion nowadays to be sceptical of everything that does not exactly fit in with the experiences of practical every-day life. Ghosts are at a discount, and the very existence of an unknown world, peopled by activities as real as our own, is questioned and even laughed at. We venture to say that this attitude of mind is as unscientific as it is unwise.

No thoughtful person would wish to put the clock back and revive the superstitious ignorance which prevailed in centuries long gone by, when everything not clearly understood was at once put down to the supernatural or miraculous. We have travelled far since those days, and the progress of science has taught us that many things hitherto mysterious are capable of rational explanation, and are simply the working out of laws which are now well understood. But we have still more to learn even about natural science, and the recent development of wireless telegraphy, for example, has shown us that it is possible for physical forces to act at a distance and through a medium hitherto supposed insufficient.

It is not unreasonable to apply this principle to the unseen or spirit world, about which we know so little. It may well be that there are forces at work—perhaps after all only different forms of those natural forces with which we are familiar—and that the operation of these forces may produce phenomena at present hard to explain, but which are none the less genuine for all that. With the further advance of knowledge, we shall probably come to understand more about such matters, but at present the attitude of the thoughtful person should be neither one of credulity nor scepticism, but simply one of open-minded enquiry.

The strange happenings described in the present article have, all of them, come within the immediate knowledge of the writer, who is able to vouch for their general accuracy. They have occurred either to himself or to his personal friends, though, for obvious reasons, names and places have, in most cases, been suppressed; indeed, it is only

subject to this condition that he is at liberty to describe several incidents which have never been made public before.

It is natural to begin with apparitions of departed persons. Everybody has heard of ghost stories, and it must be frankly confessed that a large percentage of these tales have no better foundation than that of a too vivid imagination, or a lack of sober investigation. There remain, however, an abundance of cases of the appearance of departed persons to the living, which rest upon unquestionable evidence, and which can only be explained away by imputing deliberate lying to persons of known veracity. To this latter category the following examples belong.

It has been known for generations past that that portion of the north wing of Windsor Castle which is occupied by the Royal Library is the occasional scene of the apparition of Queen Elizabeth, who at one time occupied those apartments. Many people connected with the Court have, at one time or another, seen the shade of the famous monarch walking in the evening through the rooms she occupied so long. The apparition usually comes in through the end of the library next to the corridor, passes along in front of the magnificent Elizabethan fireplace, and turns into a kind of alcove which formerly led to a flight of stone steps connecting it with the north terrace. Down these steps the Queen was in the habit of going when she took exercise.

Amongst other persons who, at one time or another, witnessed the apparition was the late Empress Frederick; and in the spring of 1897, the year of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, Lieutenant Glyn, of the Grenadiers, was sitting one day in the library turning over a volume of prints, and certainly not thinking about ghosts, when he happened to look up, and distinctly saw the spectral Queen approaching from the other end of the library. She passed near him and then turned the corner into the usual alcove. He at once rose and followed the figure, but it had disappeared.

The fact of this apparition is so well known that the librarian, Mr. Holmes, has frequently spent whole evenings in the library watching for it. But, unfortunately, ghosts do not usually appear when you look for them. It is right to add that a certain amount of difference of opinion exists as to the identification of this mysterious figure with Queen Elizabeth, but the fact of the apparition itself is unquestionable.

One of the Canon's houses within the precincts of Windsor Castle is the occasional scene of visits of an apparition commonly thought to be that of King Charles I. It only appears at long intervals, and is more often heard in the form of footsteps passing by than actually seen. One of its most recent appearances was to the wife of a well-known English bishop, who happened to be staying at Windsor at the time.

All the historic royal palaces have the reputation of being haunted. One of the best-known cases is that of the gallery leading to the royal pew at Hampton Court, along which the ghost of Anne Boleyn has often been heard to pass uttering piteous cries, as she did in her lifetime when she ran to implore mercy from Henry VIII., who was hearing Mass in the chapel, but was forcibly repulsed by the guard.

A more recent instance occurred at another of the royal palaces, where a visitor, walking down the corridor one evening, saw the figure of a very beautiful young lady in evening dress passing in a faint luminous light through a room where the lights were turned down low. The visitor was in the company of a member of the Royal Family, who, strangely enough, saw nothing of the apparition, although he was aware that one was seen from time to time.

Leaving the royal palaces, we have now to record a curious phenomenon that is sometimes observed in the chapel of a large convent in North London. It happened that a good many years ago one of the nuns broke her vows, and returned to the world, where, after an unhappy career, she died. Soon afterwards the inmates of the convent were startled to see the form of their lost sister, in her religious habit, kneeling in the outer chapel in an attitude of the deepest sorrow and despair.

This apparition is still seen from time to time, and has been witnessed by the sisters, and also by the children of the convent school, who naturally have been greatly alarmed by it. It is quite a common thing

for the good sisters, at service time, to have to hurriedly withdraw the children, when the form of the lost nun is seen passing through the outer chapel or kneeling outside the screen.

A somewhat gruesome incident took place quite lately in London, where a number of young people were present. A youth was sitting chatting to a young woman when he saw standing behind her a young sailor whom he had not previously noticed in the room. A few moments later he asked her, "Who was that sailor standing behind you just now?" She was startled, and he proceeded to describe him, whereupon she turned deadly pale and fainted.

The youth subsequently learnt that the figure he had seen was that of a young man whom the girl had jilted, and who had committed suicide in consequence. The girl was for some weeks afterwards in a state of great distress, fearing that she was haunted by the spirit of her rejected lover; but happily, nothing more was seen of the apparition, and she has now quite recovered her usual good spirits.

A London journalist of fairly matter-of-fact and unimaginative disposition, was sitting in the train at a large midland station, when he saw upon the platform an old acquaintance—whom we may call Mr. Hilton—standing somewhat apart on the platform. There was nothing whatever ghostly about his appearance, for he was a portly old gentleman wearing the conventional silk hat and black frock coat, and carrying the sample bag which he used in connection with his business as traveller for a large firm of tea dealers.

The passenger tried to attract his friend's attention, but without success, and the train immediately afterwards moved off. A few days later the journalist was again in that city, and took luncheon with a relative who lived there. During the course of the meal he remarked, "I saw old Hilton last Saturday, on the platform, as I passed through"; to which his cousin replied, "You mean *young* Hilton, don't you?" "No, it was old Hilton, not his son, that I saw." "I hardly think so," said his cousin. "But I am sure of it," persisted the journalist; whereupon he received the startling reply, "Well, all I can say is that I attended old Hilton's funeral a fortnight ago."

Here was an example of an apparition of a dead person apparently without any purpose or object. Can you explain it?

Many cases are on record of apparitions of living persons being seen. A friend of the present writer, now a priest in the north of England, was, at one time, a novice in a Benedictine monastery, and it was his duty to take an hour's watch before the Blessed Sacrament in the abbey church every morning from seven till eight o'clock. Sad to say, his devotion used sometimes to flag, and his thoughts wandered. Frequently these vagrant thoughts betook themselves to his youngest sister, to whom he was deeply attached, and he used to fancy that he was with her in her room. So vivid was the impression that he was often able to clearly recollect the conversation which he fancied had taken place between them.

After a time, finding that he had no real vocation for the religious life, he left the monastery and returned to his home. He had not been there long before his sister said to him, "While you were at the monastery, I used often to fancy that you came into my room in your monk's dress, between seven and eight in the morning, before I was up, and that we had some jolly little talks together." He enquired if she could remember any of the conversation, whereupon she repeated to him the very things that he had imagined himself saying to her while kneeling alone in the monastic choir!

Can this be a case of telepathy operating over a distance of more than one hundred miles, or how is it to be accounted for? Certainly it would appear that under some circumstances of intense emotion or ardent affection it is possible for the minds of persons far apart from one another to enter into some kind of communication. If it be true that nervous action is near akin to electric force, then it is possible that the discovery of wireless telegraphy is a step in the direction of explaining such phenomena as the one just related, and that which follows.

A father, somewhat advanced in years, was deeply attached to his grown-up daughter, who was the sole companion of his declining days. One night, feeling unwell, he left his bedroom and knocked at the door of his daughter's, forgetting for the moment that she was staying for the night with some friends at a distance.

The daughter, who, of course, did not think that her father was likely to be taken ill, was suddenly aroused from sleep by a loud knocking at her bedroom door. She hastily rose and opened it, but found no one there,

and, on making enquiry in the morning, could not obtain any explanation. On returning home she found her father ill, and ascertained that the time she was aroused from her slumbers exactly corresponded with the moment that her father had knocked at her bedroom door.

A sound of knocking seems to be one of the commonest of occult manifestations, without taking into consideration the phenomena—whether real or fraudulent—connected with spiritist séances. Various cases have come under the personal observation of the writer, especially at a house in Devonshire where he stayed, and where such occurrences were so common that little notice was taken of them. Still more mysterious manifestations used to occur at the house in question, of which the following may serve as an example.

Our host had a small room on the first-floor which he used as a private office. Sitting at his desk, with the door open, he commanded a full view of the staircase, being able to see downstairs to the hall, and up the next flight to the floor above. One night, long after the household had retired to rest, he was seated in his office busily engaged in correspondence, when he heard footsteps in the hall below. He was naturally startled, and wondered who could be about. The steps crossed the hall and began to ascend the stairs. As the office door was standing wide open, he did not rise, but simply turned in his chair, and watched to see who was approaching. It should be noted that the gas on the staircase was alight, and that he had an uninterrupted view.

The footsteps came nearer and nearer, until they reached his door, passed it, and then proceeded up the next flight of stairs, and along the corridor overhead, when they ceased. He stared with straining eyes as the footsteps passed, and saw absolutely nothing. No sooner had the steps overhead ceased, than he sprang to his feet and ran upstairs after them. Nothing was to be seen, and he went the round of the whole house, entering each bedroom, and found every person sound asleep. It may be added that our host was not at all a man of vivid imagination, and that until he went to live in the house in question, he was an utter unbeliever in occult manifestations.

Many of the strangest phenomena of this character have been recorded in connection with deaths, the form of the dying person

having been seen or his voice heard by friends at a distance, at the moment of his departure from the body. A strange case of this character occurred quite recently in the metropolis.

A priest who was greatly beloved lay dangerously ill, and had been unconscious for many days. A few doors off lived one of his most intimate friends, who was greatly distressed at the grave report of the doctors. One night he retired to rest at the usual time, and slept soundly; but about half-past three in the morning he suddenly started from sleep and sprang up in alarm, impressed with a sense that the priest needed his help. In a state of great perturbation he said the prayers for the dying, and, becoming calmer after awhile, he lay down and slept again. When he rose, some hours later, he learnt that his friend had passed away at the very moment he was so suddenly aroused from sleep.

The priest in question had been a frequent visitor at his friend's house, and had always occupied a certain chair in a corner of the study—a chair which was not very often used by anyone else. Since his death, when all has been quiet in the evening, a shadowy form has been seen several times occupying the chair just as he used to do during his lifetime.

A few years ago, two men were sitting in a room in Kilburn, about eleven o'clock one evening. One was a doctor, and the other was a city man, both of them exceptionally level-headed and sober-minded individuals. They were sitting beside the fire chatting about various subjects before retiring to rest, when both simultaneously saw a face look in at the window. Its appearance was such that they rushed out of the room in the utmost alarm. The master of the house ran in, and, being a man of action, immediately threw open the window and thrust his head out; but nothing was to be seen. Now the window in question was on the first floor, and looked out over a large garden. There was a sheer drop of about twenty feet from the window to the ground. There was no ladder, stack-pipe, trellis, or other means by which anyone could climb up to the window, nor was anyone found about the premises. Humanly speaking, it was impossible for anyone in the flesh to have looked in; and the appearance of the face, which both saw distinctly, remains a mystery to this day. Can you explain it?

An apparition of a far more shocking character took place some years ago in a country church. A well-known London clergyman, a personal friend of the present writer, and now rector of an important parish in South Africa, was conducting a mission. The mission services, which were largely attended, were held in the evenings, the usual Evensong being said in the afternoon, when few save the clergy were able to attend.

One afternoon the missionary was the only clergyman available for this service, and himself took the keys and opened the church for the purpose. It so happened that the congregation on this occasion consisted of one person only, the wife of the vicar. The clergyman said the office, and at its close proceeded to the vestry, where he removed his surplice, and then came down the church to lock up. He noticed that the lady was still kneeling in her place, and, after a considerable time, he shook the keys by way of a gentle hint that he was waiting. She then rose and passed out of the church without speaking to him, but he saw that she looked greatly distressed.

On reaching the vicarage she sought an interview with him, and had an extraordinary tale to tell. In the midst of the prayers, she had chanced to look up and had been startled to see the form of a young man leaning against the choir screen immediately behind the clergyman, and watching him intently. The young man was of extraordinary beauty, but his expression was one of the utmost malignity and hatred—quite Mephistophelian, in fact. Greatly alarmed, she covered her face with her hands, but a few moments later looked up again and saw that the apparition was still there. She again closed her eyes, uttering a brief ejaculatory prayer, and on looking up once more, found that the figure had vanished.

It was certain that no one had entered or left the church, for neither the clergyman, who was close by, nor the lady had heard anything; nor was it possible for anyone to have left the church in the moment during which the lady's eyes were closed the second time. The only conclusion the clergyman could come to was that the apparition was a malignant device of the arch enemy of souls.

It is as true now as ever that there are many things, both in this world and in the mysterious spirit world that seems to surround us, which as yet are hardly dreamt of in our philosophy.



cigars. This is because Anglo-Saxons prefer a mild smoke and imagine that the lighter in colour the milder the weed will be. Some years ago the cigars which one selected from a box inscribed "*Claro*"—the Spanish for light—were mild, but such is not always the case now. The demand for light cigars having been so extraordinarily great, the manufacturers are unable to cope with it in the ordinary way, and have taken to making their goods before the tobacco is sufficiently matured. The longer tobacco matures or ferments the darker it becomes. Some manufacturers have therefore been employing for light cigars leaves which should have been used for the medium and strong brands.

Italy has the distinction of producing some of the strongest smokes in the world.

The long, thin cigar which delights the Neapolitans is voted by men who have smoked the productions of five continents to be the most powerful of them all. There are some, however, who believe the Pittsburg "*Stogie*," a cigar enjoyed by the miners of the great American city, to be more powerful. The long black cigars largely sold in foreign *cafés* in London, are also by no means mild.

If there exists a doubt as to which place provides the strongest cigars, there is none as to the production of the best. All the finest cigars come from Cuba, and from quite a small part of that island. The famous plantations stand on the banks of a river, and the soil is such that nowhere else on the earth's surface can leaves of so high a quality be cultivated. Experiments have been carried out, and the seed from Havana crops planted in soils of other countries, notably Sumatra and Borneo. But tobacco has this curious property: when it is planted in a strange country it invariably grows up exactly similar to the surrounding tobacco plants.

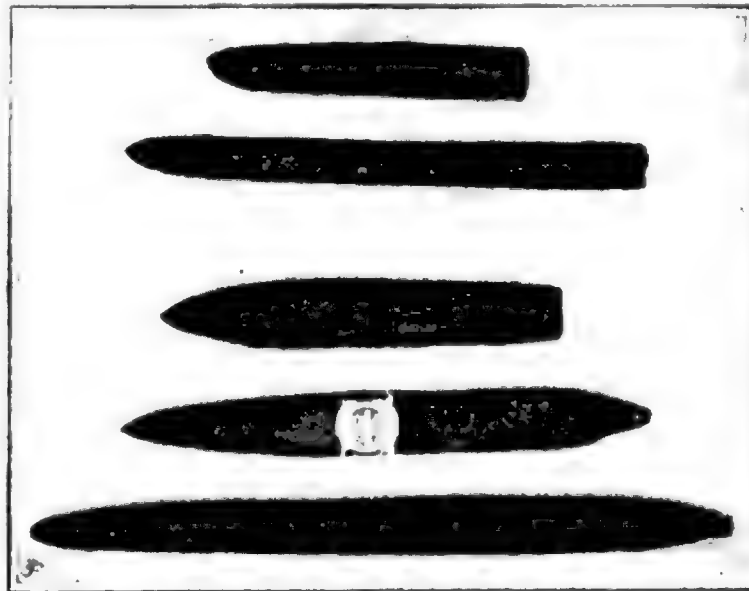
Wide as is the gap between the Havana cigars and their rivals, it is satisfactory to

learn that the next best cigars in the market are those manufactured in the British Colony of North Borneo. Australian tobacco is also considered by many authorities to have the promise in the future of as great a success as the wines of the country are already achieving.

Among the most trying of the many difficulties merchants of cigars have to contend with, and which would be peculiarly felt by shippers from Australia, are those occasioned by the extraordinary receptiveness of the goods. Tobacco has this quality so strongly developed that it requires the most careful packing, and it is almost impossible to prevent cigars getting what is called "*sea-sick*," or affected by the salt.

If they are brought over in a ship's hold with any other strong-smelling substance, they always taste of it.

The most expensive cigars cost about thirty shillings each. These very high-priced weeds are not of better quality than a cigar for which you pay ten shillings, or yet even two shillings. The great price is partly due to the size. Only very rarely can a suffi-



A selection of cigars of various sizes.

ciently large leaf be obtained to enclose one of these giant cigars.

The late Earl of Connemara—at that time known as the Hon. Algernon Burke—attended the Duchess of Devonshire's great costume ball as Izaak Walton, with a creel on his back. The King—then Prince of Wales—put his hand in the hole at the top, saying "Have we any fish here?" pulling out, to his surprise, some tremendous cigars. He and a number of friends then sought some quiet corner, where they smoked the mammoth specimens, which must have cost a small fortune. The King, who is one of the best judges in the world, usually smokes a moderately-sized cigar. He pays something like £9 a hundred, or, roughly speaking, one-and-ninepence-three-farthings each.





WAS SHE WORTH IT?

DRAMATIC NEW NOVEL BY THE AUTHORS OF 'CONVICT 99,'
'THE STORY OF A GREAT SIN,' etc.

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS IN THIS STORY.

MARCUS SOMERTON	-	A City Banker.
MRS. SOMERTON		His Wife.
RAY SOMERTON		His Daughter.
LIEUTENANT FRANK SOMERTON		His Son.
ALINE GARTH		An orphan adopted by the Somertons, and Ray's bosom friend.
MRS. LEONORA PRINCE		Posing as Lord Dartford's first wife.
HUMPHREY BOYNE		Millionaire, head of the firm of Boyne and Company, financiers.
LORD DARTFORD		A popular Peer, and brother to Humphrey Boyne.

PROLOGUE.

Lord Dartford is a generally popular peer, whose only vice is gambling, by which ultimately he is ruined. In despair he seeks his brother, Humphrey Boyne, a millionaire, to obtain money to tide him over his difficulties. Humphrey Boyne has little love for his brother, on account of his having succeeded to the title, and partly because he is in love with Ray Somerton, whom he (Humphrey Boyne) hopes to make his wife. To achieve both these ambitions, however, Humphrey Boyne makes a bargain with his brother, the terms of which are that Humphrey Boyne shall pay Lord Dartford £250,000, the latter agreeing to commit suicide at the end of twelve months, which will ensure Boyne succeeding to the title as next-of-kin. Dartford accepts these terms, but later, learning that his brother boasts that he has bought Ray Somerton (by means of financial help to her father), suggests to her a clandestine marriage, to which Ray, to escape the importunities of Humphrey Boyne, consents, and the wedding is arranged to take place secretly in three days' time.

After the marriage ceremony Lord Dartford receives an ominous telegram from a mysterious woman signing herself Leonora. Lord Dartford and his wife travel to the south of France, and after a prolonged tour they return to England and settle down in a country house near Beccles, Suffolk. Meanwhile, Mr. Somerton, the banker, is on the verge of a financial crisis, but his difficulties are tided over by the receipt of £50,000 from an anonymous donor. Aline Garth is turned away from the Somertons' house, and becomes a Sister of Mercy, in which capacity she calls upon Humphrey Boyne for financial assistance to the mission, and the millionaire falls in love with her.

Ten months after Lord Dartford's marriage, a child is born, and the peer looks forward with dread to the rapid approach of the end of his twelve months' lease of life. A woman, under the name of Mrs. Leonora Prince, calls upon Humphrey Boyne, and informs him of Lord Dartford's marriage to Ray Somerton, and the birth of a son and heir to the title, by which he, Humphrey Boyne, is deprived of his succession to the peerage. But the woman offers, for a sufficient monetary reward, to give proof that she is Lord Dartford's real wife, and that his marriage to Ray Somerton is illegal, and the son therefore not heir to the title.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE WOMAN AS BLOODHOUND.

"I'M his wife, not she; and her child can't claim his title or even his name. I'm his wife. My proper name is Leonora Boyne - Lady Dartford."

The bold-eyed, black-haired woman's bangle-charms clinked significantly as she repeated her amazing statement.

Humphrey Boyne stood staring at her open-mouthed. Even his rage was for a moment forgotten in his overwhelming astonishment.

"You Dartford's wife?" he exclaimed incredulously. "You? Well, I should like to know how you have the audacity to expect me to believe such a cock-and-bull story as this?"

An answering wrath leapt then into the coarsely-handsome woman's eyes.

"A cock-and-bull story, eh?" she cried angrily. "So that's what you say, is it, when I tell you the absolute truth for your own benefit? You actually dare to doubt a fact which it would pay you to believe?"

Humphrey Boyne's little ugly eyes still searched her unabashed face.

"I certainly doubt it, Mrs. Prince," he replied, markedly avoiding the giving to her of the title of Lady Dartford, which she had claimed. "I doubt it, because I know my brother well enough to feel practically certain that, fool though he has always shown himself to be in some ways, he yet would never have been fool enough to entangle himself with you to the extent of marriage. It is absurd to suppose it. I regret to have to say this, because, as you remarked just now, it would suit my interests better to believe that he had married you; or, at any rate, that he had married some woman c'her than this one, who, as you say, has given him a son and heir. But my common sense will not allow me to comfort myself with the idea that he ever contracted a previous marriage with such a woman as you. As I said just now, he is a fool, but not a big enough fool for that. He has, at least, gentlemanly tastes, and he is not the kind of scoundrel to have married Ray Somerton knowing that the marriage was not legal. Therefore I shall not promise you any money for the so-called proofs of the marriage with yourself which you offer, and which—if they exist at all—I can only suppose to be forged. Before I promise anybody any money, I always want to know what value I shall get for it."

At this, the wrath of Mrs. Leonora Prince—or, as she called herself, Leonora Boyne, Viscountess Dartford—became well-nigh uncontrollable. Her coarsely-red cheeks became yet redder, her bold eyes flashed, and she had, it must be owned, every appearance of being sincere, alike in her claims and in her resentment of the doubts he cast upon her story. She tried to speak, but for the moment anger had positively taken the power of clear speech from her, so that she only spluttered unintelligibly, and waved her hands until her bracelets rattled again. It was the financier who actually spoke next. He said what he wanted to say without troubling himself about her rage.

"Of course, Mrs. Prince, if you like to show me the proofs, whatever they may be, without first insisting on any pledges on my part, I shall judge if they're worth paying for; and if I consider them so, you need not doubt that I shall pay. As you have astutely gathered, it would be richly worth my while to pay in such a case."

"Very well, Mr. Boyne."

With a supreme effort his visitor conquered her choking wrath enough to speak coherently. Her black eyes flashed at him.

"Very well, since you have dared to insult me by doubting me, you shall see my proofs without any promise of money, and you shall judge for yourself whether I am speaking truth or not. All I demand now is that if you find that my statements have been true, you shall apologise to me for the insults which you have heaped upon me."

"Very well."

The financier smiled a confident smile, which was almost as insulting as his words had been. Not for a moment did he imagine that she could possibly produce any genuine proofs to back up her astounding assertion that Dartford had married her. He considered, indeed, that the last words which she had spoken were merely extra bluff.

"She's sharp enough certainly to have led any man into the pitfall of marriage with her," he said to himself, as he continued to study her. "Yes, perhaps even Gerald, in spite of his aristocratic prejudices against vulgarity and coarseness."

Aloud he added: "Show me your proofs, then, if you have them with you."

For reply the darkly-handsome Leonora—for Leonora she apparently was, whether truly Viscountess Dartford or only plain Mrs. Prince—set to work with much irritating rattling of her ornaments, to search somewhere about among the ample garments which half-concealed and half-revealed her undoubtedly fine figure, for something which she was evidently firmly determined to find. After some trouble she drew forth a folded paper, which she handed triumphantly to Humphrey Boyne.

"There!" she cried in a challenging voice. "There's my marriage certificate, Mr. Boyne. Look at it and see if I'm not your brother's wife right enough—the Viscountess Dartford!"

Humphrey Boyne, with his florid face still purple with the vindictive rage which the information that his brother had a wife and son and heir had roused in him, unfolded the paper hastily and examined it. His little, ugly eyes scrutinised it closely for a moment; and then his jaw dropped and his left hand went nervously to his head, and he brushed the hair back from his forehead agitatedly.

"Dear me!" he exclaimed, half to himself and half aloud. "Dear me!"

He walked over to the window with the paper and studied it even more intently in the fuller light.

"Well?" enquired the handsome lady, from the other side of the room, where she still stood by his table. "That's pretty clear, Mr. Boyne, isn't it?"

The financier turned round and looked hard at her across the space that divided them.

"This document certainly appears on the face of it to be a certificate of the marriage of Gerald Boyne, Viscount Dartford, with Leonora Robb——"

"That's me," interrupted the bold-eyed lady with a convincing nod. "Robb was my maiden name."

"With Leonora Robb," went on Humphrey Boyne, speaking as if he had not heard her interruption, "and the marriage ceremony was performed by Judge Truscott, in Russell City, Nevada, United States of America, on the 20th of March six years ago."

"That's right," affirmed the handsome Leonora, with another emphatic nod. "Oh, you can turn it any way you please! Upside down if you like. You won't find any flaw in it. It's as right and straight as a marriage certificate can be."

"That remains to be proved," rejoined the hard-eyed little financier calmly. "I distrust these casual western American marriages myself. But we will see."

He returned to his table and rang his bell.

"Is Mr. Cruft out there?" he asked of the clerk who answered the summons, nodding as he spoke in the direction of the waiting-room.

"Yes, sir. He's waiting to see you. He's been here about five minutes."

"Very well. Give him this."

Humphrey Boyne rummaged for a blank envelope in a groping manner which betrayed his unusual inward agitation. He found one and put the marriage certificate into it and handed it to the clerk.

"Give him this, and ask him to examine the enclosed paper and give me his opinion as to whether or not it is genuine and legal. Wait for his answer."

"Yes, sir."

When the clerk had gone the financier turned again to the lady who claimed to be his brother's only true and lawful wife.

"Mr. Cruft is an American lawyer, madam," he explained to her. "He will know at a glance if your certificate is a genuine one."

"So much the better," was the retort of the bold-eyed woman with the clinking bangles. And she sat down again to await the result of this manœuvre on the part of the man from whom she was seeking to get money. She arranged herself comfortably and threw open her rich and smart velvet cloak still wider, revealing further stretches of glaring red satin lining, which jarred in colour with her rose-hued hat. Suddenly she burst forth:—

"Well, Mr. Boyne, I must say that you aren't giving a very warm welcome to the information I've brought you, considering that for you pretty well everything hangs on it. Why, it depends on that marriage certificate being genuine whether you ever get your brother's title or not—whether it comes to you

or goes to that infant in long clothes that's down at the address I gave you near Beccles. You ought to go down on your knees and thank me for coming here, instead of treating me as if I were a liar and a fraud. I'm told by everybody that ever heard of you that you've been hankering after that peerage for years."

Humphrey Boyne eyed her narrowly.

"My dear madam, I always like to be absolutely sure of my facts before I take any action, or even express any opinion," he explained to her. "This has always been one of my strictest business principles, and I feel that my success must in a large measure be attributed to it. As it happens, with regard to your marriage certificate, it is most fortunate that Mr. Cruft should have chanced to be calling on me to-day."

Barely three more minutes had elapsed, when the clerk who had gone out with the certificate in question returned and handed back the envelope to his employer.

"Mr. Cruft has written down his opinion on the back of the envelope, sir."

Humphrey Boyne eagerly scanned the few lines that were pencilled on the back of the envelope. When he had read them he looked up. The purplish hue of rage had faded from his face, leaving his cheeks their usual brick-red colour. His eyes had a gleam of triumph in them.

"You will be glad to know, Mrs. Prince—or shall I say Lady Dartford?—that my friend Mr. Cruft declares this document to be beyond all possibility of doubt a perfectly genuine and legally valid one. This being the case, it only remains for me to convince myself that you yourself are actually and positively the Leonora Robb that my brother took to wife."

"I can easily enough satisfy you on that point, if you come round to my flat with me," said the triumphant Leonora in a gratified voice. And then she held out one of her large hands. "Will you kindly give me back the certificate, if you please?"

Humphrey Boyne looked surprised.

"Why do you want it back?" he asked.

"Because now that you've satisfied yourself that it's all right, it's only my due that I should make my own terms with you. Come on; hand it back!"

Humphrey Boyne hesitated for a moment. Then he took the certificate from the envelope and grudgingly returned it to her.

"Now you can make me an offer for the use of it," said she, in a businesslike tone. "It's worth a good sum considering all that it means to you. It's worth, in fact, just as much as the Dartford peerage is worth. And don't you try to beat the price down with the idea that I shall make the marriage known in any case for my own sake. I ought to have made it known long ago, but I loved Gerald and I didn't want a row over it. I thought I'd try first to win

him back by fair words. A woman doesn't value a man that she's got to force to come back to her, and now I've done without Gerald so long that I don't much care whether he ever comes back or not."

"How long is it since he left you?" asked Humphrey Boyne, narrowing his eyes as he looked at her, "or, to put it another way, how long did he live with you?"

"He only lived with me a month," was the lady's reply. "He had the cheek to tell me then that he'd got tired of me. Then he went away and left me out there in America. I'm not an American, you know; I'm English. Yes, he lived with me just a month."

"A month!" The financier started. "What has happened since? Has he been supporting you all this time?"

The red-faced Leonora Prince's—or shall we say Lady Dartford's?—cheeks assumed a darkly-crimson hue.

"No, no!" she answered rather disconcertedly. "I've—er—well, I've found other ways of getting along. I knew he was pretty hard up, you see, what with his spendthrift ways and his gambling, and I didn't want to make myself a nuisance to him for nothing. I've just been waiting and hoping all along that he'd come to see his wickedness in deserting me, and keeping me without any money, and would come back again on his own account. Not that a poor man is any good to me. I'd rather be without him. Even when I found out that he was getting married again I thought I'd let him have his head for a bit, especially as I was muddled up in other ways. But when it came to hearing of the birth of a child, I thought it was about time I put in an appearance on the scene to claim my rights. And then I heard of you, and as you were the party most interested in this matter of the birth of the supposed heir to the title, I thought I'd come to you and tell you your brother's secrets and my own story, and get some money and some advice from you. I want the money in particular pretty badly, for I'm an expensive person, as you can see. Clothes and a decent flat want a lot of paying for."

And she flaunted her velvet cloak, with its chinchilla trimming, and smilingly held out her wrists with their vulgar overloading of bracelets and trifles.

"Why have you called yourself Mrs. Prince?" Humphrey Boyne inquired, still eyeing her steadily.

She laughed a queer little laugh. She had recovered her temper, now that she saw a chance of getting money.

"Never mind that, Mr. Boyne. That isn't to the point. I just took the name to suit my convenience. We all do things to suit our convenience, don't we?"

"What I want to know now is, how much money are you going to give me for allowing you to make use of this certificate of mine to prove that your brother's marriage with Ray Somerton was bigamous, and that therefore the child born of the marriage isn't the lawful heir to the peerage. Will you give me five thousand pounds?"

"Five thousand?" Humphrey Boyne repeated the words in evident surprise and disconcertedness.

She nodded, setting her coarse lips resolutely.

"I sha'n't take a penny less. I must have five thousand down, as well as your help to get my wrongs righted. And considering, as I said just now, that the price is the price of a title, I'm letting you off dirt cheap. It's no use your pretending that my information hasn't made much difference to you either way. You looked like a cheated tiger when I told you of your brother's marriage and of his having a child; and the relief on your face was as plain as a pikestaff when you found that the certificate was genuine and not a fake. So you needn't try to pooh-pooh the good I've done you. As for the five thousand, why, twice as much as that would be only like a drop in the bucket to a man of your wealth. So don't haggle about it, but fork it out with a good grace."

This homely recommendation appeared to have its effect, for Humphrey Boyne, after taking two or three turns across the floor of the room, stroking his chin the while, stopped in front of her and nodded three or four times in sign of agreement.

"Very well, my dear madam. I'll pay you the five thousand you ask for, in return for your decidedly valuable information and for the use of the marriage certificate. You will, of course, give the document over into my charge on receipt of the money. But before making payment I will go with you to your flat, if you please, and inspect the proofs of your identity with the Leonora Robb of the certificate. I shall require also to convince myself of the truth of your assertion that my brother has married Ray Somerton and has a child."

In spite of his efforts not to let her see too plainly that her appearance in this crisis had been his worldly salvation, there was an unmistakable ring of triumph in his voice, and a curious grim satisfaction in the set of his hard mouth.

Three hours later he was back again in his private office, having in very deed satisfied himself that Dartford was in truth secretly married to Ray Somerton and had a newly-born son, and also that the bold-eyed woman who had first informed him of these startling facts was undoubtedly one and the same person as the Leonora Robb whose name was on the American marriage certificate which she had brought him.

He was back in his office and seated at his table as usual. But instead of looking over the papers before him, or attending to the type-written letters which awaited his signature, he was sitting idle, and staring straight in front of him.

"The title is still secure for me after all," he told himself, thinking half aloud. "But not through Dartford's excess of honour. If it had not been for this shady woman turning up, I should have found myself nicely cheated. That's what my precious brother calls being true to his bargain, is it? And that is what became of Ray Somerton when she ran away from home? Well, if he married her with another wife living, and without telling her of the sword of threatening death that is hanging over him, he did as scoundrelly a thing as ever was done by any man in this world. And he with such high principles, too, according to his own opinion of himself, and with such an extremely delicate taste in matters of honour! But it'll serve Ray right for the way she treated me. Yes, it will serve her right when she finds out that her worshipped Gerald, whom she preferred to me, is not only a spendthrift and a gambler, but also a brute. She'll repent fast enough of her choice of him when she discovers that she has never been truly his wife, and that her child is not lawfully born. She'll wish then that she'd taken me with all my drawbacks, and she may even be glad rather than sorry when Dartford carries out his bargain and shoots himself. Well, in any case, that event is very near now. There are only three weeks more to run. Only twenty-one days exactly before he pays with his life for the two hundred and fifty thousand pounds which I gave him to enjoy himself with for a year!"

He took up his paper-knife and began tapping impatiently with it on the table before him.

"I've had a narrow squeak of it in the matter of the title," he muttered, grimly. "If Dartford meant to cheat me out of it, he was false to the spirit of his bargain, and therefore acted like a scoundrel. A bargain is a bargain, whether it's a highly moral one or not. Perhaps he thought his Nevada bride was dead; and yet she doesn't look like a woman likely to die early or easily. In any case, if she hadn't turned up and tracked him and his secretly-married new wife down to their pretty little nest, things would have gone queerly with me when I came to read, at the end of the expected paragraph announcing his suicide, that his successor in the peerage would be his son, at present an infant. But, as it is, the title will still be mine. It was bought back cheaply enough at five thousand pounds."

He put down the paper-knife, and began to stroke his chin, as he always did when he was thoughtful.

"I wonder what little Aline Garth would think of all this?" he asked himself with a short, uncertain laugh.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MAN WITH THE WHIP HAND.

The days went on, and on one of them which was so miraculously clear and sunny that it was not like a winter's day at all, and least of all like a winter's day in London, Humphrey Boyne, the millionaire financier, rang the bell at the large iron gates of Bethlehem House, and asked to see Miss Aline Garth. It was the thirteenth day after that important and ever memorable one on which the bold-eyed lady, who called herself the real Lady Dartford, had come to his office.

He was shown into a spacious but very bare room on the ground floor of this substantial old building that now was used by the Sisters of Bethlehem as a house of charity, and was told that Miss Garth would come to him in a few minutes. He waited, the room seeming to him to be almost intolerably spacious and bare, and quite aggressively clean. He wondered irritably what it could be used for, and said to himself that it was a positive scandal and shame that so splendid an old house as this one, enclosed by a fine old garden, and hidden away in a convenient part of the south-west of London, should be degraded and spoiled by being devoted to the purposes of charity.

"A place like this ought to be the London home of good people, and not the residence of a set of cranky women, in shapeless clothes, all elderly and mostly plain," he said aloud in a sour, impatient voice. "And to think that I'm fool enough to be here with the intention of making these women's mission, as they call it, a bequest, so as to help them to keep up their idiotic aiding and abetting of the good-for-nothing and the unfit! I should never have believed it of myself a month ago. And it is all because Aline Garth came begging for them and took my fancy. What she's doing muddling about with such cranks I don't know and can't imagine. The only thing for her is to be taken out of it and brought back to her ordinary common-sense life. She would never have come here if there had been any other place for her to go to when Mrs. Somerton turned her out from Grosvenor Place."

He had hardly finished speaking these emphatic sentences, when one of the doors of the objectionably large and empty room opened, and Aline Garth herself entered. She still wore the plain black dress with white linen collar and cuffs which had revealed itself beneath her cloak when she had come to see him in his office; and somehow Humphrey Boyne felt almost reconciled to the frock as he now watched her approach in it. He realised the truth that after all a girl of her age is improved, rather than spoiled, by very simple clothes. He asked himself at the same time whether she

really had a right to be called actually good-looking, or whether it was only the mingled, saucy roguishness and real, unselfish goodness in it that made her face so charming. She came up to him with a bright warm smile.

"How do you do, Mr. Boyne? It is very, very good of you to come here to see me," she said.

"I have come about the gift I promised your Sisters," he replied gruffly. Even with her he still was gruff directly there was any question of money to be put out by him. Then he asked quickly and almost angrily: "How on earth can you look happy in a wretched room like this, that's so bare and comfortless, and smells as if it had been scrubbed out about half-an-hour ago?"

The girl laughed outright.

"Why, I like the room!" she exclaimed, almost merrily. "I like all the rooms in this house. This is our refectory really, but as there are more of the Sisters than usual working out to-day, we had our early dinner in the sewing room."

"Your early dinner?" echoed Humphrey Boyne. "Surely you cannot have had it yet? It is only a quarter-to-one now."

Aline Garth laughed again.

"We always have our dinner at twelve o'clock. We keep very early hours here, you see. The whole life of the house is very simple. I suppose the idea of twelve o'clock dinner seems dreadful to you, but it is much better and healthier really than having it at eight o'clock at night. I am sure it must be the simple way of living that gives the Sisters here such beautiful complexions."

Humphrey Boyne smiled an awkward half smile as his little hard eyes rested admiringly on her face.

"I am sure there isn't one of them that has as good a complexion as you have," said he, with conviction. "And you had yours before you came into this ridiculous place."

"Ridiculous? Oh, Mr. Boyne, you must not call it that, please!" Aline cried, pleadingly and yet very gravely. "It is a holy place, where women lead unselfish lives and work for Christ's sake, and only for Christ's sake. They have willingly given up human love, and every kind of pleasure, except the pleasure of doing good to others. You must surely see, Mr. Boyne, that that is noble—very, very noble!"

"I don't suppose more than three or four out of the whole boiling of them, have ever had the chance of any love of the right sort," snapped the financier, with more than a suspicion of contempt in his tone. "But never mind them and their possibly private affairs. Let us talk about the business that has brought me here—this matter of a gift of fifty pounds which I am going to make to the Sisters' mission to please you."

"To please me? Fifty pounds?" Aline Garth's roguish eyes positively danced. "Oh, Mr. Boyne, how good of you; how good of you! And yet you wanted to make me believe you were hard-hearted, and never cared for anybody's suffering or anybody's need!"

"Humph!" rejoined the millionaire financier. "If being hard-hearted means having the common sense to see that the money one gives away to the poor is money mischievously wasted, then I take it as complimentary to me that people say I have a hard heart. It is certainly a fact that I do not trouble myself about anybody's sufferings from poverty, because my business experience has shown me that poverty always comes of either laziness or drink, and often of both these causes together. But never mind these things, Aline. It's enough that I should not have given these nuisances of old women a sixpence for their mission, if it hadn't been for your pretty face and your wheedling ways. And now, shall we go out into the garden and talk? Even though it is winter, it'll be better out there walking up and down than sitting here in this hateful room that reeks of charity. Do you mind coming?"

"I should like it," Aline said. "The sun is shining so brightly. Really, it is a most wonderful day for winter."

And she went away to fetch her hat and the black cloak which made her look like those Sisters of Mercy with whom she now lived and worked.

As a rule, there was nothing that Humphrey Boyne disliked more than fresh air and exercise, and he had only suggested going out into it now partly because in very truth he detested the plain simplicity of the house, which seemed to him to be chill bareness, and partly because he had an uncomfortable feeling that someone belonging to what he called "the tribe of women" inhabiting this place would surely listen from behind some door or buttery-hatch, or possibly sliding panel—for the house was a very old one indeed—to what he had to say. And so, when Aline Garth came back with her outdoor things on, he went forth with her quite cheerfully into the beautiful old garden that was surrounded on all sides by high ivy-covered walls, and could boast of many majestic old trees, and in summer of many old-fashioned flowers that are not easily to be found in gardens nowadays.

"Let us go to the quietest part of the garden, or wherever we are least likely to meet any of your Sisters," Humphrey Boyne said in an ungracious tone as he walked along beside her, his inconvenient stoutness making him feel that her ordinary pace was not easy to keep up with.

Aline looked round at him half-roguishly, observing that he was panting already.

"Oh, let us walk more slowly," she said. And then she added: "You need not be afraid of meeting any of the Sisters anywhere in the garden, because those who are at home—I mean those who are not out collecting or working in the homes of the poor—are busy in the sewing-room or doing secretarial work. I ought to be busy with them, so I must not stay very long with you. Oh, how delighted they will all be to know that you are going to give the Mission fifty pounds? It is a very large sum for them to get all at once, you know. People are very charitable on the whole, but they usually give only small amounts at a time. I thank you very much and very gratefully on behalf of the Mission, Mr. Boyne. I am so very, very grateful to you."

"Here is the cheque," said the financier, thrusting one large, clumsy hand into the inner breast pocket of his overcoat and drawing forth a slip of paper, which he handed to her. "You will see that it is for forty-nine pounds, twelve shillings and threepence. I have deducted from the fifty pounds the seven shillings and ninepence which I gave you the last time you called at my office. There was no reason why my charity should run into fifty-one pounds."

He saw plainly the unconcealed astonishment, not unmingled with dismay, in the girl's eyes that a moment ago had been merry. But he did not understand that she could possibly think him mean.

"And mind you, Miss Garth, this is the first sum I have ever given away in charity in all my life," he added gravely. "So your precious Sisters may consider themselves extremely lucky to get it for their mission. And they owe it all to you. They wouldn't have got a penny out of me but for you, my dear girl. I'll tell them so, too, if I come across any of them."

"Oh no, you mustn't?" was Aline's alarmed rejoinder, half-laughingly spoken and half-seriously. "The poor Sisters! You must let them think better of you than that. They must believe that you gave the money out of sympathy for the good work which they are doing. They will be very thankful to see some sign of sympathy with their mission, because they are hoping by-and-by to build a hospital in connection with this house."

"A hospital?" He echoed the words disgustedly. "Another excuse for trying to squeeze money out of people who've worked hard to earn it, so that the undeserving may get for nothing conveniences and benefits which they ought either to pay for or do without. Well, they won't get another penny out of me, unless—unless, perhaps, you were to ask me very nicely and prettily, Aline."

"Oh, there are some snowdrops!" Aline cried. She had evidently not heard the half-tender little remark he had just made.

They had walked through many alleys, and now had suddenly come upon a neglected corner of the old garden that, by the look of it, might never have been trimmed and shorn at all, but always left wild to delight the eye. Here, in the unshaven, untended grass of a wide lawn, snowdrops were gleaming white; and not the ordinary small snowdrops that are usually to be seen growing within the walls of a London enclosure, but large, full flowers of spotless whiteness, exquisite to see. And in the next moment Aline Garth was bending down in the middle of the lawn and gathering a handful of the wonderful white harbingers of spring.

"See how lovely they are," she cried, when presently she brought them back to where Humphrey Boyne was standing. "Look! isn't the sight of them better than money and success and all the things that you call the good things of this world?"

The financier did look at the simple flowers; and, although he was not capable of feeling the same sensations that the little white blossoms raised in her passionate young heart, he yet was conscious for the first time that there might be other desirable things in life besides heaping up millions and juggling with fate to get hold of a peerage. Turning his eyes from the snowdrops to the girl beside him, he said:

"Why, how bright and happy you look! I really believe that you have got to look happier and even younger—although you did not need to do that—since you've been here in this miserable, convent-like place."

"Have I?" Aline laughed gaily. "If there is really any difference at all in me, it must be trying to do a little good to others that has brought it. Oh, you must not shake your head in doubt! Do you know who is the happiest-looking—yes, and the most really happy—man I know? Did I ever tell you about him? No? Well, I'll tell you now. He's a man who came home from abroad about a month ago, after having failed utterly to make a living out there. He had been lost to his family for some years, and when he'd gone away all his people had been very poor. They were very humble people—only French-polishers or something of that sort; but while he had been away an uncle in America had died and left him by will a rather large sum of money. It had been left specially and particularly to him, with only the proviso that in the event of his death it should go to his younger brother. And when he got home he found that the family had heard a rumour that he was dead; and his brother had taken the money. He found out, too, that his brother had a delicate wife and five little children; and he was so brave and unselfish a man that, although he had reached London starving and shoeless, he would not announce his return to that brother, but preferred that

the family should still believe him to be dead, so that they might keep his money with clear consciences. He has now got some work at twelve shillings a week, just to keep him from starvation; but that is all, and if he should lose that job he does not know where the next is coming from; and yet he looks so happy and as if he had found the best thing in life. I asked him why he did not ask his brother to share the money with him, and he said that that could not be, because the other was too honourable and would have insisted on giving it all up, and then there would not have been enough to give comforts to the delicate wife. Now, Mr. Boyne, do you not call that generosity heroic?"

The financier hesitated. His countenance had changed a little.

"Are you sure that it really happened as you have said, and that you have not been deceived by something being kept back?" he asked slowly.

Aline Garth shook her head.

"I am sure that it happened exactly as I have said. Well, what do you say of it?"

"I should not have believed it possible," was Humphrey Boyne's opinion.

"Would you not do the same thing yourself under the same circumstances, then, Mr. Boyne?"

He shook his head in his turn.

"No," he answered her, quite candidly. "I should not. As I have already told you, the thing hardly seems to me to be possible. A man does not often love his brother so well."

Aline smiled.

"I have met with many instances of self-sacrifice just as great and wonderful," she said, with something very like a tremble in her voice. "And, oh, Mr. Boyne, these are the people that always look really happy! Goodness and heroic unselfishness make for happiness more than anything else in the world. So, if I really do look a little brighter and happier since I have been here, as you say I do, it must be simply because I have been with good people, and have been trying to do a little good to help them in their helping of the sick and sad and hungry and desolate-hearted."

"Brighter and happier?"

As Humphrey Boyne looked at the girl now, he felt that "sweeter" would have been a better word to use. She had always looked sweet in her saucy, roguish way—yes, even in the days when she had lived side by side with the striking and brilliant beauty of Ray Somerton—but now her little round face seemed to him to be sweetness itself. He felt again the charm that lay in her frankness of manner. He felt, indeed, a charm and a magnetism that came from her whole self; from her eyes and from the merry smile, from her voice and her manner, and from the movements of her small figure. And then, too, bright and lightsome though she was, there

was a soft gentleness about her that matched the restfulness of this old garden, with its trees that had seen a hundred years go by, and its grass, in which snowdrops sprang up gloriously pure and rich with promise. Humphrey Boyne felt a curious new sensation of restfulness and peace as he watched her.

Suddenly, as his hard, ugly eyes were feasting themselves upon her, a thrush sent forth a little song into the sunlight of this wonderful winter day. And that song hastened the change that was taking place in the soul of the hardened man of the world.

He stood for a moment stroking his chin. Then he put out one hand and caught and clasped one of the hands of the girl beside him.

"Aline," he said, "I don't know whether I like goodness for its own sake or not; but I know that I like it in you. What would you say if I were to tell you that I love you?"

Aline Garth made him no answer at first. She had started very slightly, and now stood looking at him, utterly overcome with surprise. The financier went on hurriedly:

"Yes, Aline, it is true. I do love you. I have been getting to love you for weeks—ever since you came to me that first day in the office—and now, to-day, I realise that you are very dear to me. You are dearer to me than Ray Somerton ever was; dearer than any other woman could ever be. And even while you have grown dear to me you have been making a great change in me. Since I have come to know you better I have found out that money and social position and success over all competitors generally, are not all that a man wants in this world. I have come to see that kindness of heart is not always necessarily foolishness, and that love is not always a sham, but can be strong and real and without any taint of self-interest, as my love for you is now. Aline, do you think you could ever love me?"

Once more he paused, but still the girl remained silent. He watched the changes on her face.

"Aline, if you were any other woman I should talk about my money and the position that I've got to offer my wife," he went on. "People are right when they say that I have millions. And then, it is probable that some day I—I shall succeed my brother, Dartford, in the peerage."

He gasped a little at this point, as if something were wrong with his throat or with his breath. But he went on too quickly to give Aline Garth time to speak here, even if she would have spoken.

"I feel, however, that these things mean very little to you; and I know that, without them, I have not much to recommend me as a husband for any woman. I am a sharp business man, but that's no merit in your eyes, either. Perhaps the best thing I can say

is that I should be a better man—better from your point of view, and that of other good people—if you can make up your mind to try to love me and to marry me. Will you try, Aline?”

The girl in the plain black frock and the short black cloak, that gave her something of the look of a Sister of Mercy, did find her voice then.

“I—I don’t know,” she stammered confusedly. “You have startled me so much, Mr. Boyne, that I don’t know how or what to answer you. I am grateful to you—oh yes, please believe that I am very grateful!—and I am sorry for you, and glad that you—that you—”

She broke off, not knowing clearly what it was that she was saying. Humphrey Boyne only held her little, thin hand more warmly. He had noticed that that hand had borne traces of rough work lately; but in this moment, strangely enough, that fact only made him hold it with greater tenderness.

“Don’t answer me yet,” he said, half-soothingly, half-beseechingly. “Wait, and think over it a little. And, meanwhile, there is something I want to tell you—something I want to ask your advice about. It—it is a case in which a man needs advice, and—and there is no one so capable of giving him advice, in the circumstances in which he is at present placed, as you are. You are so good that you can always see the right thing to do in a difficulty, the right way out. This case that I am going to tell you of is not a matter of law, but of conscience. I should know how to deal with a matter of law, but it needs the clear judgment of someone who is good and innocent to decide a conscience difficulty. Shall I tell you the case?”

“Yes, if you think I can help.”

Aline had nodded, looking at him with a new wonder in her troubled brown eyes. She had never thought it possible that he could be agitated as he was agitated now. An odd, grey pallor had spread itself over the brick-red of his complexion, and his voice had sounded uncertain, unsteady. What could be the matter with him?

“Yes. Please tell me,” she urged him more encouragingly, seeing that he hesitated.

Then in a thick, jerky voice Humphrey Boyne told the story of his bargain with his brother, disguising it so that she might not suspect that it in any way concerned himself.

“A rich man whom I know well has a cousin who stands in the way of his career. This cousin, who is poor, came to him a year ago to borrow money, as he had often done before; and the rich man made a compact with him that he would give him a very large sum of money indeed—in fact, practically a fortune—on condition that in a year’s time exactly, he would take his own life and so get out of the way.”

“Oh!” The word was a little cry as it came from Aline Garth’s lips. The girl had drawn back a step, and sheer horror looked out plainly from her face. “Do you mean me to believe it possible that any human being ever suggested a compact such as that?”

“Why not?” Humphrey Boyne’s lips were whitening. “Does it strike you as so very horrible?”

“It is awful.” The girl shuddered. “It is worse than awful. It is criminal.”

The financier waited a moment, averting his face from her. Then he went on, still jerkily:

“Well, anyhow, awful or not, it is a fact. The man who gave the money laid down these terms, and the man who received it accepted them. And now——”

“Yes?” said Aline Garth, eagerly, seeing that he hesitated again.

“Well, now the year fixed is nearly up, and the man who has agreed to die by his own hand is getting ready to shoot himself, while the other, his cousin, who imposed the death condition is now anxious and half-remorseful over the business, and troubled with bad dreams at night. He has a feeling that he ought, after all, to retreat from the situation before the tragedy of the suicide takes place. And yet the suicide is the payment that he demanded for the gift of money that he made; and, as it was agreed to, he does not see why it should not be exacted. Yet, because now, on the eve of the fulfilment of the compact—a ghastly compact, I admit—he has scruples of conscience and nightmares, he has confided in me, and asked me for advice. And I—I have come to you, Aline, because you have the clear judgment of the innocent, and I ask you what advice I ought to give him.”

“What advice?” Aline Garth drew a sharp, quick breath. “Surely, Mr. Boyne, you must see as well as I that it is not a matter for advice. There is only one thing to be said, only one thing to be done. The man that holds the whip hand in the bargain, the man who imposed the terrible condition of suicide—and ah, what sort of human monster can such a man be?—must recall his condition, must forego everything, instantly. Even if he has to lose everything—all the money that you say he gave to his cousin—he must break the dreadful compact and forego his advantage, and repent. Oh, Mr. Boyne, you must tell him this at once—to-day. You must tell him to repent, for in his soul he is a would-be murderer as much as if he were himself preparing to shoot the other man with his own hand.”

You feel this? You look at it in this way?

Humphrey Boyne did not actually speak these words. He only formed them somehow on his lips distinctly enough for the girl to see them. The greyness of his face now was positively alarming; and it must assuredly have either

alarmed Aline greatly, or else must have given her some suspicion of the grim story being connected with himself personally, had she not been too horrorstruck by what he had told her to observe himself very closely.

"There is no other way in which to look at it," she returned, earnestly. "Do you not yourself see the horror, the awfulness, the miserable wickedness of it? Oh, I cannot believe that you heard that man's story and were not grieved by it? You must go to him at once and tell him that it is infamous, and that it must not go on to the end, or he will be guilty of murder in the sight of God, even though his fellow human beings may never know of his crime." She locked her hands. "If I could tell him myself, I would try to make him realise what a monstrous thing it is that he has done—or thinks of doing. But you must tell him, Mr. Poyne. You must see this unspeakably horrible bargain as I see it, and must tell him. Ah, you do see it as I see it! You are pale—terribly pale—and agitated! Oh, why do you come to me for any advice? You have a better heart than mine and a clearer judgment, although you will not admit it. People may say that you are a hard man as much as they like in future, but I shall never believe them. I know better."

"I will try not to be a hard man in the years to come, if you will help me by loving me and giving yourself to me to be my good angel, Aline," the financier said, in a voice that shook strangely. "I have not been worthy of the love of a woman such as you, but I will try to be so in the future if you will help me and encourage me. This is where the difference comes in between the feeling which I had for Ray Somerton and which I thought was love, and the real and true and strong love which I have now for you. I never asked of her that she should make me a better man. But I do ask this now of you. She is happier with my brother, and I see now that I—"

"With your brother?" Aline Garth broke in eagerly with the question. "Then was it for Lord Dartford that Ray refused to marry you? Do you know where she is now?"

"Ah! I forgot that you did not know." The grim look had come upon Humphrey Boyne's features again. "She is with Lord Dartford. They were married secretly on the day when she ran away from home, and now they are living in a country house belonging to Lady Orr, down near Beccles, in Suffolk. They have just had a child; but—"

What had he been going to say? Whatever it had been, he evidently judged it wiser to leave it unsaid. He saw that Aline's eyes were dancing with joy again.

"Dear Ray," she cried delightedly. "Oh, I am so glad! I am so glad! But why has she kept it all such a secret? Why, I believe even

her father and mother don't know yet where she is or what has happened to her? I wonder why she hasn't told anyone—and not even me? She used to confide in me always. Why has she not let me know at least that she is married?"

Humphrey Boyne smiled oddly.

"I expect you will know the reason for her silence some day, Aline. No doubt it was Dartford who insisted on the secrecy. But never mind them now. Tell me that you will love me, and will come to me and give me something to live for, and some reason to try to be a better man."

The brown-eyed girl in her plain dress, that made her look a little like one of the Sisters of Mercy with whom she lived, began to shake her head slowly and a little wistfully.

"A very rich man like you ought to marry a woman of wealth and position, Mr. Boyne," she protested.

He smiled another curious little smile, whose meaning she did not understand.

"I thought that, too, until this hour," he admitted to her with an openness which was new in him. "I have been trying to put down my growing love for you by telling myself that a man who is getting on in the world, as I am getting on, ought to marry in such a way as to improve his social position at a bound. But since we've been here together in this garden, Aline, you have taught me better. I know now that I want you, and that no other woman would suit me. I want you to love me, little girl, and by loving me to try to make me more the sort of man that you would like me to be."

A little sadness and doubt mingled with Aline Garth's confusion as she looked at him.

"I'm afraid you'd only get tired of me and of what you call my goodness, and would wish that after all you had married somebody better worth marrying from a worldly standpoint."

He shook his head confidently.

"Never," he declared in a tone of absolute certainty. "I shall never want anyone but you, Aline. Come, you pretty, innocent child, say that you will try to love me."

In spite of his commonplaceness, in spite of his usual brick-red complexion and his mouse-coloured moustache, he looked positively dignified at this moment. So completely can love transfigure a man! And Aline Garth yielded.

"Yes, I will try," she promised him, very low. "But you must not think me good, Mr. Boyne. I am not really good at all. I only try to help those who are doing good."

The financier's face flushed.

"Call me Humphrey, Aline, and I'll give a thousand pounds to your Sisters for their mission, or their hospital, or anything else they like to devote it to. Call me Humphrey just once."

He drew her closely to him so that he might the better hear her speaking of his name. And she uttered it in a timid whisper.

"And now will you promise me to go to that man you told me of, who has made the compact of suicide and tell him that for sheer humanity's sake he must repent, and forego, if necessary, even the repayment of the money he lent or gave? Will you tell him this?"

And, with the greyish pallor stealing over his face again, Humphrey Boyne muttered that he would tell him.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE LOOMING HORROR.

"Ah, Reynolds, I have been forgetting that you asked me for leave to go out to-night! Yes, you may go. And you need not come in until eleven."

"Thank you, sir." Humphrey Boyne's valet and confidential servant looked very much surprised. His master had never spoken in so amiable a tone, nor ever before shown consideration of any kind for him.

It was as a man tortured in soul that Humphrey Boyne had come away from Bethlehem House after his hour there in the old garden with little roguish-eyed Aline Garth; the hour which had ended in Aline's yielding to his entreaty that she would try to love him. He had not gone back to Old Broad Street and his office, but had come straight home to his rooms, racked with doubt as to his bargain of blood with his brother. There were only eight days more to pass before that brother would be bound in honour to fulfil his part in the bargain, by taking his own life. This fulfilment - this death - was what he, Humphrey, had been waiting and hoping for. Had he not craved for years past for his brother's peerage. And did that brother deserve any mercy, when he had tried to cheat him out of the title by marrying and having a child.

But Aline Garth had said that the compact was horrible, infamous, murderous; Aline had shrunk back horror-stricken when she had heard of it. She would shrink in horror from him, Humphrey, if she should ever come to know that it was he who had devised the bargain which he had talked of as the bargain of another. Was he justified, then, in demanding the carrying-out of the terrible condition of death? Could he demand that this condition should be carried out, and yet at the same time hope for the blessing of the love of Aline? For he had learned enough to-day to understand that Aline Garth's love would be a blessing for any man.

All that night he lay awake; a rare occurrence for him. He lay awake, torn between love and doubt. Now and again, when the hatred for his brother, which had festered in him for years, surged up black and strong in his soul again, he turned on the light of the electric lamp at his bedside, and looked hard and longingly at a photograph of Aline, which he had begged of her after the promise she had given him in the Bethlehem House garden. Her saucy, lovable little face had not had justice done to it by the photographic process, but it was her face, none the less, and the pictured sweetness of it overcame again and again the evil within him.

In the morning, when he went to his office, his doubts concerning the rightness of enforcing the terms of his bargain with Dartford tortured him even more cruelly than they had done in the night.

For the first time in all the years of his business career he spoke a few words of pleasant greeting to his clerks as he passed through the outer office. When he had disappeared into his private room these same clerks looked at each other with astonishment. Their eyes asked each other what could be the matter with the "boss" this morning that he should be so agreeable.

The "boss" meanwhile, in his private office, had placed the photograph of Aline Garth on his table, just where his eyes could turn to it easily as he sat looking over his papers. He looked at it now for some five or six minutes; looked at it with love in his small, hard, ugly eyes. Then he turned his attention to the date as set forth by his calendar, and was struck by it.

Only seven days now before Dartford, his elder brother, must put himself out of the ranks of living men in fulfilment of the conditions of his bargain!

Humphrey Boyne must surely have been already aware of the nearness of the terrible date that was to see the end of his brother's spendthrift and reckless career; and yet now the realisation of it caused him a positive shock.

"My God!" he exclaimed, starting up from his chair and standing with his hands tightly clenched in an anguish of sudden horror. Hitherto the mere fact of suicide had seemed to him to be unimportant in itself, and certainly neither infamous nor very terrible when the man who has put an end to his life has been more or less of a failure. But now he saw the awful act in its true light, and his soul recoiled before the naked hideousness and fearfulness of it.

"Only seven days?" he muttered to himself now, between heavily drawn breaths, while he kept his eyes averted from the photographed face of Aline Garth lest it should reproach him. "Only seven days? My God!"

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DAY OF FULFILMENT.

It was the eve of the terrible repayment.

Dartford and Ray sat together after dinner in the pretty drawing-room in the Marchioness of Orr's country house near Beccles, which was still their home. They were alone as always; for, although they had now been married close upon a year, they were still in that stage of passionate love for each other in which the presence of a third person is not only not wished for, but is even intolerable. They sat side by side on a couch near the blazing wood fire, whose dancing flames, many-coloured by reason of the fact that the burning wood was old ship's timber, drew answering gleams of light from Ray's copper hair. Except for this flickering illumination by the flames there was little enough light in the charming bijou drawing-room; for electricity had not yet found its way out here to this Suffolk village, and the single, rose-shaded oil lamp, which burned in the middle of the room, was more ornamental than useful, and would not have afforded any great help to a person desirous of reading small print.

Very happy looked the young Lady Dartford, as she leaned back in her corner of the couch and smiled tenderly to her husband. The fire-light caught not only the golden lights in her hair, but also the threads of the gold embroidery that brightened her white dinner dress and the points of her gold-coloured shoes.

A ride in the morning and a long walk in the afternoon had brought a deep rich colour into her soft cheeks and a wonderful clearness into her eyes. Altogether she made a picture so attractive that it was no wonder that Dartford looked at her longingly, adoringly.

But there was another and a deeper reason for his looking at her to-night with an unusual earnestness and intentness; a reason which she herself did not dream of and with which her beauty had nothing to do. And this undreamed-of, unsuspected reason was her husband's secret conviction that this evening was the last of their happiness and the last of their love; the last evening on which they would sit together, the last of their wedded joy, and—most terrible fact of all!—the last of his life.

"What is the matter with you to-night, Gerald? You are quite silent and sad."

Dartford smiled a forced smile that was very unlike the warm, bright, open-hearted smile that usually lighted up his whole face.

"Silent and sad?" he echoed in a voice that struck her as strange. "Do I seem so, dearest?"

"You have seemed so for a week past," was his wife's quick answer. "And to-night you are in a darker mood than ever. It troubles me, because it makes me feel that after all my love is not enough to make you happy."

"Ray!" His voice was sharp with pain. "My darling, you must not say that. Your love is everything to me—everything. Everything. It has been for this year past the only joy, the only strength that I have in the world. It is because it is so much to me that I cannot help thinking of the—the agony it would be if we were parted; if anything should happen to break the spell of our happiness, to tear us from each other."

Ray leaned towards him and kissed him.

"It would be terrible, Gerald—terrible. But what could do it? There is nothing, dearest, nothing. That is what is always so sweet to me—the thought that nothing and no one on earth can separate us now."

She saw his mouth twitch.

"There is always death, Ray," he murmured. "We must not forget that. There is always death."

"Death?" Ray smiled in her triumphant youth and life and health. "Death? What a strange thing for you to think of, Gerald! As if death were likely to come to either of us until we have grown old and grey, and have known the joy of our love for years and years!"

Dartford shook his head. His handsome face was unusually pale, and the gaiety that was always at other times in his eyes had entirely died out of them.

"We can never be sure, my darling." He spoke in a slow, strained voice. "We can never be sure when death may come to us. Now, for all we know, this may be our last evening together. What if it were so, heart's dearest?"

He laid his hand almost imploringly on her arm; her soft arm, whose whiteness was half-veiled with lace.

"What if this were our last evening together, Ray?"

She lifted her finger to reproach him.

"I am not going to think of anything so silly, Gerald. And I will not have you think of it, either. Oh, dearest, when you are so happy with me and with baby, why should you think of troubles and sorrows which are not likely to come to us. Really, Gerald, I am almost afraid that you must be ill! You are looking quite ill to-night."

Dartford said no more then, but only stooped his head and kissed her bare shoulder. Later, when she rose from her seat saying she would go to bed, for her long walk of the afternoon had tired her, he said to her as he took her in his arms:

"Supposing for a moment that anything did happen to me, Ray—will you forget me in a year or two, and marry some other fellow? Or would you remember me, and keep true to my memory always and always?"

She looked at him in half alarm and surprise for a moment. Why would he keep harping

on these gloomy subjects? Then she answered earnestly, passionately, and yet half-smiling:

"Of course I should keep true to you always, Gerald. How can you need to ask. But why are you so nervous and strange in your manner to-night? Are you thinking that there may be a railway accident to-morrow?"

When she had gone to bed, Dartford went to the smoking-room, locked the door on the inside, and sat down by the fire. Then he drew a revolver from an inner pocket of his coat, and began to examine it.

This was the instrument with which to-morrow—yes, to-morrow—he must put himself out of life.

His face became like a mask of marble as the awful fact presented itself to him in all its luridness. It had seemed bad enough when viewed from a distance; but now, confronted at close-quarters, it was horrible, appalling. Yet it had to be faced. There was no getting out of the present situation except by the awful and shameful gate of death. And before passing through this gateway he would have another difficult task to perform, a task that was almost as repugnant as the act of dying itself. And that was the business of informing his brother of his secret marriage and of the birth of an heir who would deprive him, after all, of the much-desired peerage on account of which the bargain had been made.

"Humphrey will be like a madman," he said to himself, now. "He will say that I have acted dishonourably—that I have cheated him."

He handled the revolver again, almost caressing it.

"Perhaps it will be better over and done with," he murmured in a thick voice. "God knows, I have suffered a worse agony than that of death during this past year of terrible expectation. It will be better to get it over and done with. It is not the death itself that I fear; it is the separation from Ray, the awful blow it will be to her, the loss to the child—my child. But Ray is young, and the young can survive even the most killing blow; and the boy, who never knew his father, need not miss him. Yes, it will be better to have done with it. The only question now is—how can it be made to look like an accident? For the child's sake—yes, and for Ray's sake, too—it must not be generally supposed to be suicide. The world must never say that my boy is a suicide's son. God save him from that, at least!"

It was very late when he went to bed; and even then it was not to sleep. All night he lay a prey to secret and silent mental anguish such as few men ever know. So great was his suffering, that he thanked Heaven when the first glimmering grey of dawn lightened the window blinds. Yes, he thanked Heaven, although that glimmering grey brought him nearer to his death.

He rose, carefully avoiding waking his wife. He went to his dressing-room and dressed himself without ringing for his valet, and then went back into the bedroom and leaned over Ray as she slept.

How beautiful she was as she lay asleep in the half-light of the still curtained room, with her cheeks faintly flushed and her long lashes shadowing them, and her bosom gently rising and falling as she breathed!

His heart quickened its beating as he looked at her. His soul was filled with revolt. Why was he doomed to leave her—her, whom he loved with a love amounting to positive worship?

But nothing could alter now the fact that he had to go, and go to his death. He had bound himself in honour, and there was no shirking possible, no turning back.

He must go before she wakened, before she could question him closely as to his programme for the day. He had told her yesterday that he was going to London in the morning, but he had not said for what reason; nor that he meant to catch an earlier train than usual. And this morning he felt no strength in his soul to meet her eyes if she should unclothe them, nor to answer her questions without betraying an agitation that would arouse her suspicions. Even as it was, the parting from her while she lay sleeping and silent, would be worse than the death which was soon to follow.

He stooped over her and kissed her hair, touching tenderly with his shaking fingers one little shining curl that rested on her white forehead. He would not kiss her face, lest she should wake under the touch of his lips. He kissed her soft hair, stifling a groan as he did so.

"It is this that is the real death," he said in his bursting heart. Then he turned to the muslin-curtained cot that stood beside the bed and leaned over it and kissed the child that lay sleeping within it. Then he turned hastily and went out of the room. He could bear no more. He had been tried to the uttermost, and he knew that if he stayed longer he would not be able to go at all.

He went down to the dining-room. Should he ring for his breakfast?

It did not seem to him that breakfast mattered. He did not want to eat. All that he wanted to do was to get out of this house and away to the railway-station before Ray should wake. He said to himself that certainly if he lingered any longer he would not have strength to go. That was sure. For he was leaving his heart as well as his joy behind him in this house, in which his love and his child were sheltered.

He rang, not for breakfast, but to order the carriage to take him to the station. He walked to one of the casement-windows then, to look out at the gardens which soon would have the touch of spring upon them. At the sound of the opening of the door he turned round sharply.

"Bates, I want the brougham at once——"

He stopped, thunderstruck. He had realised that it was not the footman who was standing before him, but his brother Humphrey.

"*You?* Humphrey!" he exclaimed, staring as if the very solid and commonplace looking human creature before him had been a spectre. And he drew his hand across his eyes, perhaps to reassure himself as to their being really open. "*You?* How is it that you are here?"

"I slept in Beccles overnight, so as to be certain of getting here first thing in the morning, before you started for town," the younger brother, who looked so many years the elder, explained. "I—I assume that you intended to come up, and—not to do it here."

Humphrey Boyne's voice was raw and jerky and unnatural, and there was a change in his whole aspect, as well as in his manner, which Dartford could not understand. He went on before Dartford could make any reply:

"I—I have come down to say that I know everything, and—and forgive everything—that is, as much as I am concerned in forgiving—and it is my desire that we should consider the bargain off."

"The bargain off!" Dartford still stared at him in amazement.

The financier nodded. "Yes. It's not for your sake; it's for mine. I—I don't feel as I used to feel. I've met a good woman, and she loves me, and it has made a difference. I don't want your blood upon my soul. The compact was a bit brutal, not to say anything worse; some people would call it infamous. We'd better invalidate it. I don't mind losing the money, in spite of its being a pretty considerable sum. I'd rather lose it than have this stain of suicide upon the family—now. As for the peerage, well, we'll discuss that presently. It took me a good time to arrive at this decision, as you may suppose; but I did arrive at it, last night, and now it's final. Well, what have you got to say?"

The peer's handsome, worn face did not as yet show any relief. It was still like a mask of marble.

"Is this because you consider that I had already broken the terms of the compact by my secret marriage—of which, of course, you must be aware, since you have come here?"

The other shook his head. "No. It has nothing to do with that. Have I not just told you that my wish to be off with this thing comes from a change in my own soul? We'll speak of your marriage in a minute or two, but you need not suppose that it has anything whatever to do with the alteration in my attitude."

"You do not suspect me of being a coward?"

"A coward? *You?*" Humphrey Boyne smiled amusedly as he shook his head. "But for the fact that your wife is under this roof, I should have been afraid lest that you might be already dead when I reached here."

The shadow cleared a little from Dartford's face.

"Since you say that, Humphrey, the bargain shall be off, if you wish it," he said. "But only on condition that I repay the two hundred and fifty thousand pounds that you gave me."

"Repay it?" The coarse-featured younger brother looked positively confounded. "Have you got it to repay?"

Dartford nodded.

"I've had the devil's luck since our compact was made," he explained. "Everything has gone right with me, financially. Every investment that I have made has repaid me something like a hundredfold. I shall certainly only accept my release from death at your hands on the condition that I repay the whole of the money."

Humphrey Boyne shrugged his shoulders. "You may repay it, if you insist upon doing so. But if you do so, the entire two hundred and fifty thousand shall go to the Sisters of Bethlehem. They want to build a hospital, and the money will go a good way towards that end. And now, before we talk any more upon this point, or any other connected with the bargain that has just been revoked, I want to ask you to explain to me your marriage with Ray Somerton, in the light of the fact that a certain Leonora Robb was already your wife."

At this Humphrey Boyne saw his brother turn to him with blank astonishment and enquiry on his face; blank, and yet not altogether devoid of sudden apprehension.

"Leonora Robb—already my wife?" he repeated, slowly. "Perhaps you will explain, Humphrey."

The younger brother drew a step nearer to him. "Look here, Gerald! A handsome sort of woman, not a lady, but a fine creature in a coarse way, came to my office three weeks ago, announcing herself as Mrs. Prince, and declaring that she was your wife. It was she who told me of your marriage to Ray Somerton, and of the—the birth of your son. She declares this second marriage to be illegal, and the child not lawfully your heir. She asserts that she was married to you six years ago, in Russell City, Nevada, by Judge Truscott; and she showed me a certificate of the marriage—a certificate which an American lawyer has declared to be absolutely genuine and valid."

"A certificate? A certificate purporting to prove her marriage with me?"

"Exactly," said Humphrey Boyne, with an emphatic nod. Dartford recoiled.

"Well, this is the cleverest fraud that any woman ever invented!" he exclaimed, with conviction.

"A fraud?" The younger brother's certainty was evidently slightly shaky, and his brick-red complexion grew paler in hue. Prepared though he had been to make sacrifices, he had not yet resigned himself to the loss of the hope of

succeeding to the peerage if, in the natural course of things, Dartford should die before him. "Do you mean to say this is not true? Did you never marry this woman?"

Dartford advanced a step again.

"Do you actually suppose, Humphrey, that I could have been such an unmitigated black-guard as to marry Ray Somerton when I already had a wife living?"

The financier recoiled in his turn.

"But the certificate?" he pointed out in a voice of protest. "How can you get over the certificate? It's as legal as any document ever was."

Dartford shook his head.

"It can't be," he denied, uncompromisingly. "I never married the woman. Consequently, any paper setting forth that I did marry her is bound to be irregular—in fact, fraudulent."

More and more perplexedly and disconcertedly Humphrey Boyne stared at his brother.

"There must be some mistake," he asserted, confidently. "Do you know this woman at all, Gerald?"

Dartford hesitated a moment.

"I have never seen her. But I believe she has written to me. Anyhow, about two years ago a woman who signed herself with my surname—and I remember now that her Christian name was Leonora—wrote to me several times, addressing me as her husband, and appealing to me to come back to her. I thought that she must be some madwoman, and I put her letters in the fire. And—ah, yes, in the last one she wrote something to the effect that she would have come to see me but that she was waiting for the certificate of her marriage with me to be sent over to her from America. Now, I suppose, her friends over there have succeeded in making up some sort of a document and providing her with it. She is evidently now no lunatic, but a deliberate impostor. She even had the audacity to telegraph to me, here, on my wedding day, but her message only disturbed me in so far as it showed that she knew where I was, and all about my secret marriage. She is plainly a very clever spy and a bold liar."

Yet Humphrey Boyne was still manifestly unconvinced.

"You must come up with me and see this woman, Gerald," he decided. "There's something very wrong here. You are sincere in your denial of her, but she is equally sincere in her claim upon you. There is no mistaking that. Come up with me now and see her. Don't say anything to your wife, but let us catch the next train and get daylight in on this mystery. I regarded this woman as an impudent impostor at first, but before very long she converted me; and, if I have believed her story, even for an hour, you may depend that there is something worth believing in it. Come, let us get to the station."

Without a word, Dartford crossed the room and rang the bell.

"I rang for you just now, Bates," he said, when the footman appeared. "It was just before Mr. Boyne came in."

"I beg your pardon, sir. I didn't hear the bell. I expect I was at the front door."

"Very well, Bates. Tell Hopkins I want the brougham at once to go to Beccles to the railway-station."

"Yes, sir."

The man withdrew to give the order. Dartford turned to his brother. "Have you breakfasted, Humphrey?"

"No," was the financier's reply. "I meant to get some breakfast here; but it doesn't matter now. I'd rather hurry off and get to the bottom of this mystery as soon as we can. Your wife is not up yet, I suppose?"

"No." There was a curious softening in Dartford's voice as he spoke of Ray. "I left her asleep a few minutes before you came."

"So much the better," the other rejoined. "It will be well for her if she can escape the knowledge that once a threatening shadow overhung her happiness. If this other woman's claim should turn out to be a false one, your wife need never know that she ever appeared on the scene."

"If it should turn out to be a false one?" cried Dartford hotly. And then his anger died as suddenly as it had risen. He went close to his brother and held out his hand.

"I am very sorry, Humphrey, that I took Ray away from you. You see, I didn't think then that you would grieve very much; and I knew that Ray had a heart to break, and that she loved me and looked to me to save her from unhappiness. I struggled hard to keep from marrying her because of our compact, I can tell you. But at last love conquered every other feeling. I—I had never thought that a child might come who would cheat you out of your title. Forgive me, Humphrey. It was my fault more than Ray's. She would have kept her word to you, even at the cost of her heart breaking, if I had let her."

And Humphrey Boyne actually smiled.

"I can afford to forgive you both now, Gerald. I have learned what love is since then."

Dartford looked at him in wonder. What could it possibly be that had wrought such a change in him.

"The carriage is at the door, sir," Bates announced.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DAWN LIGHT.

The handsome Leonora, with the jingling bangle charms, had a very pretty flat in Fulham, and it was to this flat that Mr. Humphrey Boyne, financier and millionaire,

took his brother, Viscount Dartford, when the up train from Beccles had landed them at Liverpool Street. They covered the distance between that uninviting city terminus and Fulham in a hansom, Humphrey Boyne inwardly cursing the length of the journey all the way. When their destination was reached, he alighted from the hansom with quite surprising activity and rang the door-bell, leaving Dartford to pay the fare.

"Is Mrs. Prince in?" he asked of the manservant who answered the bell.

It turned out that the handsome Leonora had the first floor flat, and the visitors were therefore ushered straight into her drawing-room without any stair climbing or lift process.

"What names shall I say, sir?" enquired the man.

Humphrey Boyne gave his own name, suppressing his brother's. The servant disappeared, and in another moment the full-figured, much bejewelled Leonora herself entered the room.

She approached the financier with apparently eager pleasure.

"How do you do, Mr. Boyne? Very glad to see you. And who is this; a friend of yours, I suppose? He's very welcome, I'm sure."

She had turned to Dartford, who was looking at her with an expression in his eyes which clearly showed that he had never seen her before. Amazement came on Humphrey Boyne's countenance.

"So you do not know by sight the man whose wife you claim to be, Mrs. Prince?" he exclaimed in a tone of condemning severity. It was a tone, too, in which personal resentment was mingled. For, although he had sacrificed much in order that he might approach the high standard of morality which Aline Garth demanded of him, he yet had continued, secretly, to hope that this woman's tale of marriage with his brother might be true, and that the child that Ray Somerton, the second wife, had given to Dartford might not stand, in the future, between himself and the peerage.

"So you do not know Lord Dartford by sight?" he repeated, angrily. "Well, without knowing it, my dear madam, you have already proved yourself a liar and an impostor. What is more, madam, I shall give you into custody on the charge of obtaining money by false pretences."

"What are you talking about?" cried the bold-eyed lady, becoming angry in her turn. "This man here is not Lord Dartford."

"Certainly he is Lord Dartford," coldly asserted the financier. "You need not hunt about for some way out of the muddle that will leave you as white as snow; because there is no such way, and so you cannot find one. This is Viscount Dartford here, and yet you, who declare that he married you six years ago, did not recognise him when you saw him. That

fact admits of only one interpretation; and that interpretation is that you are, as I have already said, a liar and an impostor, and that you have obtained the sum of five thousand pounds from me by false pretences."

The handsome, coarse-featured lady sank down upon the nearest chair and began to fan herself. She was a woman who delighted in odds and ends, and she had a fan as ready to hand in winter as in summer.

"There's a mistake somewhere," she panted. "And perhaps you'll set yourselves to explaining it, instead of turning round on me and abusing me. The man that I took for my husband out in Russell City, Nevada, called himself Gerald Boyne, Viscount Dartford; but he didn't look like this Gerald Boyne, Viscount Dartford, that I see here."

Dartford leaned towards her, silencing his brother with a sign. His face wore a puzzled and yet eager expression.

"Will you give me the personal description of the man who, as you say, married you under the title of Dartford?"

"Who I *say* married me?" cried the panting Leonora, affronted by the implied doubt. And she shook her fist in her questioner's face until the trifles hanging from her bracelet rattled furiously. "You don't either of you think my word worth a rap, do you? I tell you that the man that married me called himself Lord Dartford, and had a yellow moustache and wavy sandy hair, and something a bit wrong with one eye. He was a middle-sized man and..."

"I know him!" Dartford exclaimed. And he turned to his brother—"Humphrey, that's Carteret; my old college friend Carteret! Don't you remember him? The description fits him exactly. He was out in the Western States six years ago, too. It was he, certainly. Don't you remember that he once vowed he would be even with me for that boyish love affair of mine with Mary Seaton? We were only lads, you know, but he took it to heart that Mary liked me better than she liked him, and he said he would never forgive me for it. He vowed he'd pay me out, and in some way connected with a woman. And this is how he has done it. It's all as clear as possible."

Humphrey Boyne muttered an oath. His face had grown very dark.

"Where is Carteret now?" he asked.

"Out in the States still."

"I thought he'd slipped back home to England," interposed the bold-eyed lady, who was now beginning to weep. "But I daresay he deceived me in that matter as well as in every other. That's the way I always get treated. So I'm Mrs. Carteret, am I? Has he got any money? As long as I'm legally married to somebody that's got some cash, I don't care a brass farthing who it is."

"Unfortunately, my dear madam, I'm afraid that in this case you've got hold of somebody who is practically penniless," said Humphrey Boyne grimly, "although for the matter of that I am by no means sure that you are legally married at all—even to Carteret. If you are not, so much the better for you. A man who plays practical jokes is no good to any woman as a husband. And now, Gerald, if you are satisfied, we may as well go. We are near Bethlehem House, and I want to call in there."

"I'm sorry you're done out of the succession to the peerage, Mr. Boyne," said the handsome Leonora, by way of a parting shot. "And seeing how the matter stands, I'm pretty sure you won't bring me up now on the charge of getting money by false pretences."

"I'm going to see Aline Garth," Humphrey Boyne explained to his brother when they had got into the Fulham Road.

Dartford looked surprised. "Aline Garth? Where is she now? Surely she is not in the place you mentioned just now—Bethlehem House?"

The financier nodded.

"Yes, she is there. Mr. and Mrs. Somerton turned her out, as you may know, saying that they could not afford to support her any longer. And there was nowhere else that she would go but to the Bethlehem Sisters. She has been working with them ever since, and has been very happy; but she is going to leave them soon for a home of her own."

Dartford looked at him with interest.

"Do you mean that she is going to marry?"

Humphrey Boyne smiled a significant smile.

"Yes. She is going to marry me."

"Marry you?" The elder brother started.

"Yes, me. What is there so extraordinary about it?"

Dartford smiled in his turn.

"Nothing, except that—well, I thought that, having lost Ray, you wanted to marry a woman with money and even with a certain social position."

"I wanted that a little while ago, Gerald, certainly, but I know better now."

Nothing more on the subject was said between them then, for they were turning in at the gates of Bethlehem House. Another moment and they were in the refectory, which Humphrey had always found so chill and bare. And Aline Garth had come to them; Aline, simple as usual in her plain black frock and white linen collar and cuffs.

"I have good news for you, Aline," the financier said, smiling with a smile such as Dartford had never seen brightening his face in all his life before. "My brother, Lord Dartford, is going to give two hundred and fifty thousand pounds for the founding of your Sisters' hospital."

"I?" exclaimed Dartford, while the girl stood motionless, and too much overwhelmed to speak. And then he understood and said, "No, Miss Garth, it is not I, it is my brother who is going to give the money. You must understand that. Whatever money the Sisters may receive it will be Humphrey who has given it—every shilling of it."

The girl burst into happy tears.

"Oh, Lord Dartford, I always knew that your brother was a good and tender-hearted man, although people tried to make out that he was cruel, and bitter, and uncharitable."

Humphrey glanced at his brother imploringly. Was he mutely asking him not to destroy the girl's fair dream that he was good? Then he spoke to his little sweetheart again.

"Aline, I have made up my mind that you are to marry me in, at longest, a month's time from now. And, meanwhile, you are to go and stay with Lady Dartford—your dear Ray of the old days."

The pretty roguish, still tearful eyes of the girl in the plain black frock and white linen collar softened wondrously for a moment, and even danced with quick gladness. But she shook her head as she locked her small thin hands together.

"I should like to be with Ray again very, very much. It would be a great joy to me to be with her and the baby. But I cannot leave the Sisters until the very last moment. No, Humphrey, I must not; not even to please you. It will be soon enough to leave them when—when I go away with you."

She spoke the last words very low and with a deep, sudden blush. Dartford, more and more amazed at the change in his brother, had walked away towards the window with the seeming intention of looking out at the old garden, but with the real purpose of leaving the loved and the lover alone together.

CHAPTER XIX.

WAS SHE WORTH IT?

"I hope Ray's baby is well again by this time," Aline Boyne said anxiously to her husband as they sat together on the terrace of their pretty white villa outside Florence. "She loves him so that this illness must have been a very great trial for her. What a pity they are not both here, in this sunshine and under this blue sky, instead of facing the rawness of early spring in England!"

Humphrey Boyne smiled to her, shaking his head the while.

"Now, Aline, you know you always love spring in England. It means primroses to you, and daffodils, and strong fresh winds and bursts of unexpected sunlight. You know you have always seen good in the English spring when nobody else saw it, just as you have

always seen good in me, though nobody else saw it."

"Oh, Humphrey! Everyone that knows you sees the good in you now. The Sisters think you are a saint upon earth. There are not many rich men who would give two hundred and fifty thousand pounds in charity anonymously."

The millionaire-financier laughed.

"That is because you have brought it to the surface, my dear little girl," he assured her, with the nearest approach to playfulness that was possible to his heavy, matter-of-fact nature. "You have made a different man of me, Aline. But I have done you some good in return, for your face is rounder and plumper, and your eyes are brighter than I ever saw them before. Why, you're looking very nearly a beauty at this moment? Yes, nearly as much a beauty as my old love and present sister-in-law, Ray, whom you admire so much."

"Oh, I couldn't ever be half as lovely as she is, Humphrey. You know that very well. And I don't want to be, if you are quite satisfied with me as I am. And you are satisfied, aren't you, Humphrey? You don't want me any prettier?"

She blushed as she asked the question, and her husband moved his chair nearer to hers and leaned over and kissed her.

"You're the prettiest little girl in all the world to me, Aline; and if you only knew how sweet you are looking now in that white frock and with those flowers in your belt, you wouldn't have asked me if I am satisfied. You suit Italy, Aline. Perhaps it is because you are a little brunette. Fair women look lovely here, but so uncommon and remarkable that they look more like the Italian's idea of an angel than like ordinary flesh-and-blood human creatures. On the other hand, brunettes in England often look as if they suffered from liver complaint; whereas here they are like peaches. The only pity is that I am not good-looking enough for you."

"Humphrey!" exclaimed the little bride of a month, reproachfully. She was going to say more, but checked herself and drew a little away from her husband. For her English maid had appeared at the end of the terrace and was coming towards them.

"A telegram, ma'am," she said.

Mrs. Humphrey Boyne took the missive, which was addressed simply to "Boyne," and might therefore be considered to be for either of them impartially.

"It is from Gerald," she announced agitatedly.

She glanced at the message again, and then uttered a little cry.

"Humphrey, their child is dead! Oh, poor Gerald! poor Ray!"

Humphrey Boyne uttered an answering exclamation. And then his face grew pale, as hers had done. But his change of colour had not the same cause as hers.

This news of the death of Dartford's infant son and heir had indeed caused him a shock of consternation and grief. But it had also caused him another shock of a different kind. The thought had flashed instantly through his mind: "If I had exacted the fulfilment of the bargain, and Dartford had died by his own hand two months ago, the peerage would have been mine to-day."

He got up and walked the length of the terrace, thinking deeply.

"Humphrey, we must go back?" Aline's voice was speaking in his ear. She had risen also, and had come to his side. "We must go back. We must go to them at once, and try to comfort them. Poor Ray must be distracted. And Gerald, too, loved the child so much! We must catch the first train that is possible. I will go in and give orders for everything to be packed up."

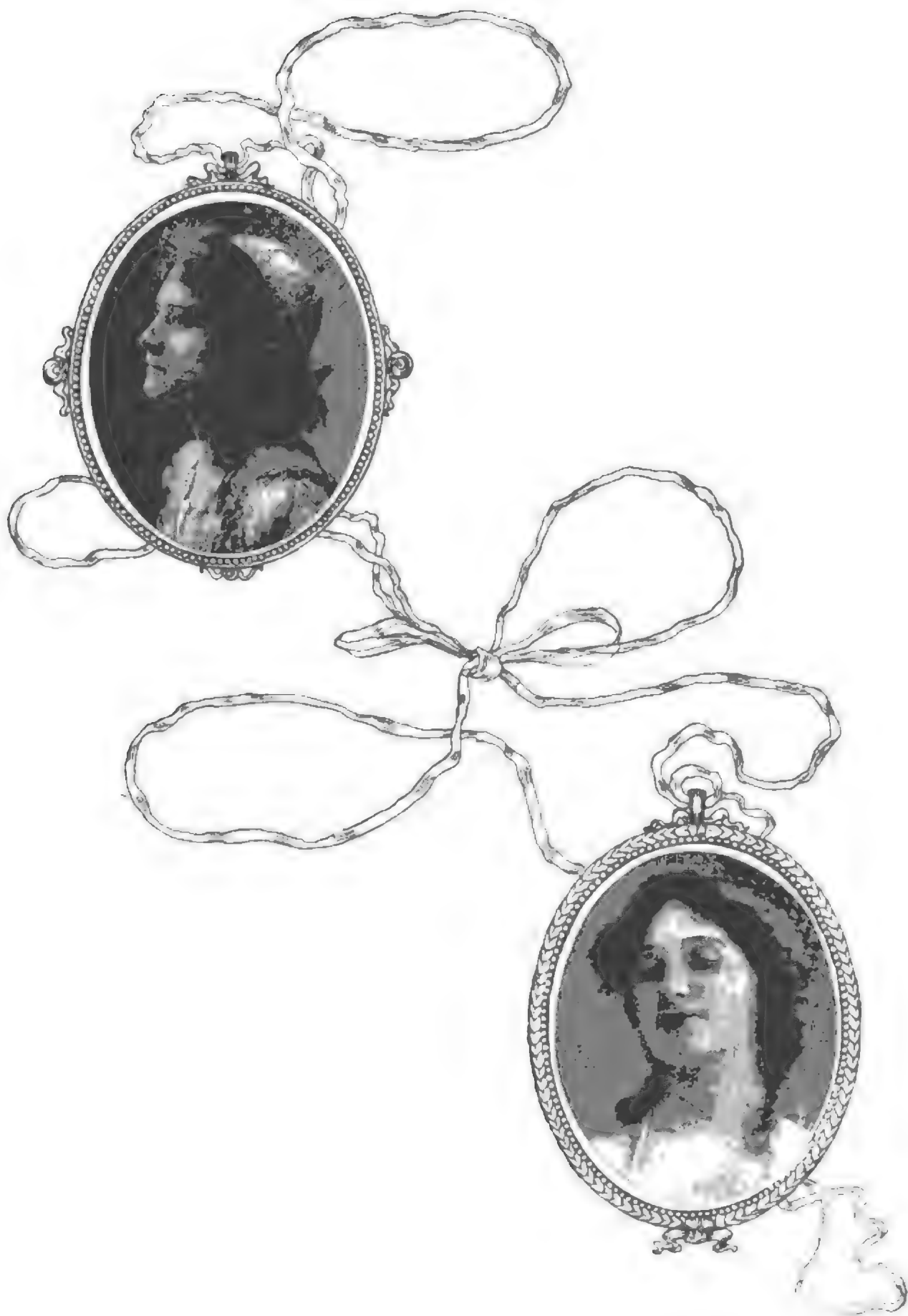
Humphrey Boyne did not immediately answer her. He was thinking that the sacrifice he had made for her sake in sparing his brother's life had been very great indeed.

It was exactly at the same hour a week later that Dartford himself mentioned the same subject, as the two brothers talked together in the library at Lord and Lady Dartford's country home—the old family mansion of the Boynes, which had been added to and re-decorated, as well as re-furnished.

"As it turns out, Humphrey, you made a great sacrifice for Aline when you cancelled our compact, and so allowed me to live," the elder brother said in a tone whose forced lightness did not in the very least conceal the sadness underlying it. "If I had fulfilled my part of the bargain, then you would have been Viscount Dartford, after all. How do you feel about it? Was Aline worth it?"

"Was she worth it? Yes; a thousand times yes!" Humphrey Boyne's answer was fervent and even passionate. "For I have come to see, Gerald, that although a peerage is a good deal, yet love is more. In fact, love is everything. Aline has taught me to see that. I might have given up more than I did, and I should still have been richer without it all, having this woman's love, than if I had kept it all and had missed the blessing of having her in my life."

THE END.





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the book is a collection of essays, each of which is a review of a book. The essays are written by a variety of authors, including some of the most prominent figures in the field of international law. The book is a valuable resource for anyone interested in the field of international law, and it is a must-read for anyone who is studying or working in the field.

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And the camel responds :

"Then load me quickly."

At the end of the march, as he loosens the ropes, he will sing some such refrain as this :

"The camel is tired, the camel is tired."

And the camel replies by proxy :

"The grass is good."

Thus the Somali weaves a little romance about the most prosaic duties of the day.

The outfit of a Somali is simple, and varies little among the various tribes save in the size and pattern of their spears. The northern tribes, such as the Aysa and Gada-bürsi, carry a heavy stabbing spear, most of the others two—the "warran waine," the bigger, for jobbing at close quarters, and the "haughto," a throwing javelin which in expert hands will fly a hundred yards and often hit the mark. The accuracy of its flight is increased by a skilful manipulation of the shaft between the fingers and the ham of the thumb, which gives it a spin such as the rifling of a rifle gives a bullet. In my earlier visits I saw many natives still wearing skins instead of cotton tobes. These were often as smooth and supple as chamois leather, of a nut-brown colour, at times finished off with a fringe of embroidered work. One such skin tobe, ten feet long and three-and-a-half feet wide, completed the dress of a Somali, and was vastly superior to the cheap cotton tobes now universally worn. It cost labour and trouble to make, and was dirty—for both reasons the Somali threw it aside. The Somali loves to wash himself and his clothes, and to dress himself in white, and wears his tobe with grace and art. The women clothe themselves with elaborate care in two cotton tobes, one of which makes a petticoat and the other a covering for the bust and shoulders. When thus attired an artist might be defied to arrange their drapery with more effect. So little in the last decade were Somalis accustomed to see jackets and trousers that one of the Assistant Residents on the coast told me when it was decided to put the Somali Coast Police into khaki tunics and short trousers, and their new uniforms were served out to them, they appeared on parade the next morning proud and serious in their new tunics, which were anything but long, with their trousers twisted into turbans on their heads, the only use they could imagine these strange garments could be put to! Besides his spears and his tobe, the native carries

upon his arm a small white round shield (gashan), made of oryx or rhinoceros hide, a little leather prayer mat over the shoulder, a small plaited grass bottle in which is water for the road and religious ablutions, and sometimes on his feet, but as often in his hand, a great heavy pair of leather sandals or shoes, the soles of which contain thirteen thicknesses of oryx skin or other tough leather. Amongst Mohammedans there is no greater insult than to strike a man with your shoe, and when you have seen, as I have, the results of a blow in the face with a Somali shoe, it is easy to appreciate the enormity of such an offence! Thus fitted out, a Somali is ready to take the war path or a journey of hundreds of miles on his pony or on foot.

I have always maintained, if properly handled and not subjected to a too vigorous discipline, that the Somali would make an ideal native soldier, and my opinion is not shaken in the least by the fact that they cut and run in the fight at Erego last October. They are excitable and impulsive, and unused to rifle fire, and, till they get accustomed to a kind of warfare that is absolutely unfamiliar to them, they must be well supported by white men in whom they have learned to have confidence. In native warfare, whether open battle or hand-to-hand conflict, all is mad excitement, and this excitability in action has been the undoing, for the present, of the Somali's character as a soldier. After all, the men who made them run are the same blood and stuff as themselves, and many drawn from the same tribes. Besides, I believe that any men unexpectedly and suddenly attacked, believing at the moment that they have the choice of certain death or flight, will usually take to their heels. The day has gone by when we assert that all the men of any particular race will always prefer death to surrender or flight, and among every people you will find some who sympathise with the Irishman who preferred being a coward for ten minutes to being dead all his life.

I have seen too much of the individual Somali to believe he is a coward. A man that will stand up to a charging elephant, that will never turn a hair or quit your side when a lion is coursing down on you like a greyhound, who will seize a lion's head in his bare hands and shake him to make him drop his master, who will tackle a lion with his spear alone to save his sahib's life, who



Figure 1. A person standing in a field.





Figure 1. A person standing in a field, looking towards the camera.

The first part of the study was a pilot study. The purpose of the pilot study was to determine the feasibility of the study and to estimate the sample size required for the main study. The pilot study was conducted with 10 participants. The results of the pilot study showed that the study was feasible and that the sample size required for the main study was 100 participants.

The main study was conducted with 100 participants. The participants were recruited from a local community center. The participants were randomly assigned to two groups: the control group and the intervention group. The control group received no intervention, while the intervention group received a 12-week intervention. The intervention consisted of a combination of physical activity and cognitive-behavioral therapy. The physical activity component of the intervention involved walking for 30 minutes, three times a week. The cognitive-behavioral therapy component of the intervention involved working with a therapist to identify and change negative thought patterns and behaviors. The intervention was delivered by a trained therapist. The participants in the control group were also monitored by the same therapist. The participants in the control group received no physical activity or cognitive-behavioral therapy. The participants in the control group were also monitored by the same therapist. The participants in the control group received no physical activity or cognitive-behavioral therapy. The participants in the control group were also monitored by the same therapist.



chest from the wreck of the *Meikong*. He stuck fast to his find and refused to part with his prize to the ruler of the Mijjertain, and took up arms and waged war against the Sultan. Eventually, with the aid of his friends and his wealth, he obtained the rule of Obbia, and dubbed himself Sultan. With a Somali's eye to the main chance, he lent himself to the Italian designs of obtaining a footing on his coast, and accepted Italian protection. The Italian flag was hoisted at Obbia in 1889. Up to the advent of the present British expedition he has played his cards well, and displayed ability and intelligence, and been a trusted friend of the Italians. Latterly, whilst making professions of friendship to us, he appears to have played a double game, and surreptitiously placed every obstacle he could in the way of our obtaining transport and supplies. What may have been his motives in giving so much trouble it is not quite easy to guess, possibly a mixture of a desire to obtain famine prices for what was requisitioned with a fear of a permanent ousting of his authority, or it may be that in spite of what he and his people have suffered at the hands of the Mullah he has a leaning to the policy of Somaliland for the Somalis. With the sanction of the Italian authorities, he has been removed to Aden, where he is undergoing a process that might be described in any less heated place as cooling his heels. In any case he can no longer be counted among our friends.

The third division of Italian Somaliland is that which lies between the Sultanate of Obbia and British East Africa. This coast is known as "El Benadir." This littoral is studded with ports, and takes its name from this fact. It formed, till 1892, part of the possessions of the Sultan of Zanzibar, and was under British protection from 1890 to 1892. In 1892-3 the coast was assigned to Italy, and has since been administered by an Italian Chartered Company with small garrisons as far as Logh (or Lugh) in the interior.

The Italians, before the terrible disasters to their arms in Abyssinia, had been recognised as entitled to take almost the whole of the interior of Somaliland as their sphere, but after the peace made with Menelik in 1896 the greater part was abandoned to Abyssinia, and in the following year the British Government ceded about one-fifth of British Somaliland to the Abyssinian Emperor.

It is from this period that we may date the commencement of our troubles. Until the abandonment by Italy of the interior to Abyssinia and the cession of British territory that followed in 1897, the Pax Britannica, or at least the prestige of British authority spread far beyond the limits of our coast protectorate. Across the waterless Haud and into distant Ogaden, beyond even the Webbe Shebeyli or Leopard River, Englishmen could travel, would be received with respect, were invited to adjust inter-tribal quarrels and implored to represent the wish of the people to enjoy the same protection as their neighbours under the British flag. They lived in constant dread of the cruel Habasha, the name by which alone the Abyssinians are known in Africa. The Galla nations that had been a buffer between them and the Abyssinians had yielded one by one to the conquering armies of their hereditary foes. The Abyssinians were no longer an enemy that fought like themselves with spear alone, and the Gallas went down before the rifles of Menelik. The Italian campaign delayed the Somalis' fate, but its result increased their terror, for the Habasha had made vulture's food of the white man's armies, and even the English had handed over Somalis and territory to the Abyssinians. They saw no more Englishmen coming across the Haud, and in their place raiding parties of Abyssinians appeared who carried off their flocks and left them in beggary when they left them their lives. It is probable that the Mullah himself, as well as those who flocked to his standard, had at the outset no other idea than that of freeing his people from the scourge of the Christian Habasha and no animus against the British. But when once a jihad, or holy war, is proclaimed among a Mohammedan race, and especially one like the Somalis, who fight for sport and loot among themselves, to military ardour is added religious enthusiasm. The Somali who refused to join the standard of rebellion got short shrift and his possessions fell into the Mullah's hands.

The Mullah Hadji Mohammed Abdullah has been christened by the English Press "The Mad Mullah." This nickname arose from the confusion of our Pressmen. There was a so-called Mad Mullah on the Indian frontier when the Somali Mullah first came into public notice, one Bonerwal, who attempted to oust the Ahkund of Swat, and who was mainly instrumental in bringing about





THE GOLDEN CASTAWAYS.

A SHORT STORY.

By LLOYD OSBOURNE.

Illustrated by JOHN CAMERON.

I.

ALL I did was to pull him out by his legs.

The fat old thing had gone out in the dark to the end of the yacht's boat-boom, and was trying to worry in the dinghy with his toe, when plump he dropped into a six-knot ebb-tide. Of course, if I hadn't come along in a launch he might have drowned; but as for anything heroic on my part—the very notion is preposterous. The whole affair only lasted half a minute, and in five minutes he was aboard his yacht and drinking hot Scotch in a plush dressing-gown. It was natural that his wife and daughter should be frightened, and natural, too, I suppose, that when they had finished crying over him that they should cry over *me*. He had taken a chance with the English Channel, and it had been the turn of a hair whether he floated down the current a dead grocer full of brine, or stood in that cabin a live one full of grog. Oh, no, I am not saying a word against *them*. But as for Grossensteck himself, he ought really to have known better, and it makes me flush even now to recall his monstrous perversion of the truth, for he called me a hero to my face.

It was all I could do to tear myself away. Grossensteck clung to me. Mrs. Grossensteck clung to me. Teresa—that was the daughter—Teresa, too, clung to me. I had to give my address. I had to take theirs. I departed in a blaze of glory, and though I could not but see the ridiculous side of the affair (I mean as far as I was concerned), I was moved by so affecting a family scene, and glad, indeed, to think that the old fellow had been spared to his wife and daughter.

I never gave another thought to Grossensteck until one morning a few months later, while away on a short holiday, the postman appeared and requested me to sign for a registered package. I opened it with some trepidation, for I had caught that fatal name written crosswise in the corner, and

began at once to apprehend the worst. I think I have as much assurance as any man, but it took all I had, and more, too, when I unwrapped a gold medal the thickness and shape of an enormous checker, and deciphered the following inscription:—

Presented to
HUGO DUNDONALD, ESQUIRE,
for having
With Signal Heroism, Gallantry and Presence of
Mind, rescued
On the night of August 3rd, 1900,
the life of
HERMANN GROSSENSTECK
From the Dark and Treacherous Waters of the
English Channel.

The thing was associated with a blue satin ribbon, which was to serve for sporting it on my manly bosom. I set it on the table and laughed—laughed till the tears ran down my cheeks—while the other guests in the boarding-house where I was staying crowded about me; handed it from hand to hand; grew excited to think they had a hero in their midst, and put down my explanations to the proverbial modesty of the brave.

"Grossensteck!" one of the boarders exclaimed, reading the inscription on the medal. "Why, that's the great cheap grocer of Glasgow. Oh, everybody knows Grossensteck!"

"Well, I pulled the great cheap grocer out of the Channel," I said, and I took another look at my medal and began to laugh all over again.

"There's no reason why you should ever have another grocery bill," said the boarder, "—that is, if flavour cuts no figure with you, and you'd rather eat condemned army stores than not!"

I sat down and wrote a letter of thanks. It was rather a nice letter, for I could not but feel pleased at the old fellow's gratitude, even if it were a trifle overdone, and when all's said, it was undoubtedly a fault on the

right side. I disclaimed the heroism, and bantered him good-naturedly about the medal, which, of course, I said I should value tremendously and wear on appropriate occasions. I wondered at the time what occasion could be appropriate to decorate one's self with a gold saucer covered with lies—but, naturally, I didn't go into that with *him*. When you accept a solid chunk of gold you might as well be handsome about it, and I piled it on about his being long spared to his family and to a world that wouldn't know how to get along without him. Yes, it was a stunning letter, and I've often had the pleasure of reading it since in a splendid frame below my photograph.

I had been a month or more in Glasgow, and June was already well advanced before I looked up my Grossenstecks, which I did late one afternoon as I happened to be passing in their direction. It was a house of forbidding splendour, and as I trod its marble halls I could not but repeat to myself: "Behold, the grocer's dream!" But I could make no criticism of my reception by Mrs. Grossensteck and Teresa, whom I found at home and delighted to see me. Mrs. Grossensteck was a stout, jolly, motherly woman; common, of course, but—if you can understand what I mean—common in a nice way, and honest and unpretentious and likeable. Teresa, whom I had scarcely noticed on the night of the accident, was a charmingly pretty girl of eighteen, very chic and gay, with pleasant manners and a contagious laugh. She had arrived, obviously, at the turn of the Grossensteck fortunes, and might, in refinement and everything else, have belonged to another clay.

Well, to get along with my visit. I liked them and they liked me, and I returned later the same evening to dine and meet papa. I found him as impassionedly grateful as before, and with a tale that trespassed even further on the incredible; and after dinner we all sat round a log fire and talked ourselves into a sort of intimacy. They were wonderfully good people, and though we hadn't a word in common, nor an idea, we somehow managed to hit it off, as one often can with those who are unaffectedly frank and simple.

What impressed me as much as anything with these people was their loneliness. Parvenus are not always pushing and self-

seeking, nor do they invariably throw down the ladder by which they have climbed. The Grossenstecks would have been well content to keep their old friends, but poverty hides its head from the glare of wealth and takes fright at altered conditions.

"They come—yes," said Mrs. Grossensteck, "but they are scared of the fine house, of the high-toned help, of everything being gold, you know, and fashionable. And when papa sends their son to college, or gives the girl a little stocking against her marriage day, they slink away ashamed. Oh, Mr. Dundonald, but it's hard to thank and be thanked, especially when the favours are all on one side!"

"The rich have efferyting," said Grossensteck, "but friends—Nein!"

New ones had apparently never come to take the places of the old; and the old had melted away. Theirs was a life of solitary grandeur, varied with dinner-parties to their managers and salesmen. Socially speaking, their house was a desert island, and they themselves three castaways on a golden rock, scanning the empty seas for a sail. To carry on the metaphor, I might say I was the sail and welcomed accordingly. I was everything that they were not; I was poor; I mixed with people whose names filled them with awe; my own was often given at first nights and things of the sort. In London a man need have but a dress-suit and cab-fare—if he be the right kind of man, of course—to go anywhere and hold up his head with the best. The Grossenstecks were overcome to think I shined my own shoes and had to calculate my shirts, and the fact that I was no longer young (that's the modern formula for forty) and next door to a failure in the art I had followed for so many years, served to whet their pity and their regard. My little trashy love-stories seemed to them the fruits of genius, and they were convinced, the poor simpletons, that the big magazines were banded in a conspiracy to block my way to fame.

"My dear poy," said Grossensteck, "you know as much of peeziiness as a child unborn, and I tell you it's the same efferywhere—in groceries, in ironmongery, in the alkali trade, in effery pranch of industry, the pig operators stand shoulder to shoulder to spificate the little fellows like you. You must combine with the other producers; you must line up and preak through the ring; you must scare them out of their poots, and I'll help you to do it, my poy."



one like myself, ugly and grey-haired. In fact, I had to laugh, one of those sad laughs that come to us with the years, at the thought of anything so absurd; and I soon got her to give up her tragic pose and see the humour of it all as I did. So we treated it as a joke, rallied the old folks on their sentimental folly, and let it pass.

It set me thinking, however, a great deal about the girl and her future, and I managed to make interest with several of my friends and get her invited to some good houses. Of course, it was impossible to carry the old people into this *galère*. They were frankly impossible, but, fortunately, so meek and humble that it never occurred to them to assert themselves or resent their daughter's going to places where they would have been refused. Old Grossensteck would have paid money to stay at home, and Mrs. Grossensteck had too much homely pride to put herself in a false position. They saw, indeed, only another reason to be grateful to me, and another example of my surpassing kindness. Pretty, by no means a fool, and gowned by the best costumiers of Paris, Teresa made quite a hit, and blossomed as girls do in the social sunshine. In her widening interests, broader range and increased worldly knowledge we became naturally better friends than ever, and met on the common ground of those who led similar lives. What man would not value the intimacy of a young, beautiful and clever woman; in some ways it is better than love itself, for love is a duel, with wounds given and taken, and its pleasures dearly paid for. Between Teresa and myself there was no such disturbing bond, and we were at liberty to be altogether frank in our intercourse.

One evening when I happened to be dining at the house, the absence of her father and the indisposition of her mother left us tête-à-tête in the smoking-room, whither she came to keep me company with my cigar. I saw that she was restless and with something on her mind to tell me, but I was too old a stager to force a confidence, least of all a woman's, and so I waited, said nothing and blew smoke rings.

"Hugo," she said, "there is something I wish to speak to you about."

"I've known that for the last hour, Teresa," I said.

"This is something serious."

"Blaze away."

"Hugo," she broke out, "you have been borrowing money from my father."

I nodded.

"A great deal of money," she went on.

"For him—no," I said. "For me—well, yes."

"Two or three hundred pounds."

"Those are about the figures," I returned. "Call it three hundred."

"Oh, how could you! How could you!" she exclaimed.

I remained silent. In fact, I did not know what to say.

"Don't you see the position you're putting yourself in?" she said.

"Position?" I repeated. "What position?"

"It's horrible, it's ignoble," she broke out. "I have always admired you for the way you kept yourself clear of such an ambiguous relation—you've known to the fraction of an inch what to take, what to refuse, to preserve your self-respect—my respect—unimpaired. And here I see you slipping into degradation. Oh, Hugo, I can't bear it."

"Is it such a crime to borrow a little money?" I asked.

"Not if you pay it back," she returned.

"Not if you mean to pay it back. But you know you can't. You know you won't!"

"You think it's the thin edge of the wedge?" I said. "The beginning of the end and all that kind of thing?"

"You will go on," she cried. "You will become a dependent in this house, a hanger-on, a sponger. I shall hate you. You will hate yourself. It went through me like a knife when I found it out."

I smoked my cigar in silence. Of course, she was quite right—horribly right, though I didn't like her any better for being so plain-spoken about it. I felt myself turning red under her gaze.

"What do you want me to do?" I asked.

"Pay it back," she replied.

"I wish I could," I said. "But you know how I live, Teresa, hanging on by the skin of my teeth—hardly able to keep my head above water, let alone having a sovereign to spare."

"Then you can't pay," she said.

"I don't think I can," I returned.

"Then you ought to leave this house," she said.

"You have certainly made it impossible for me to stay, Teresa," I replied.

"I want to make it impossible," she cried.

"You—you don't understand—you think I'm

and coat. That was the last I saw of her—in the shadow of a palm, her girlish figure outlined against the black behind. I walked into the street with a heart like lead, and for the first time in my life I began to feel that I was growing old.

II.

I have been from my youth up an easy-going man, a drifter, a dawdler, always willing to put off work for play. But for once I pulled myself together, looked things in the face and put my back to the wheel. I was determined to repay that three hundred pounds if I had to cut every dinner party for the rest of the season. I was determined to repay it if I had to work as I had never worked before. My first move was to change my address. I didn't want Grossensteck ferreting me out and Mrs. Grossensteck weeping on my shoulder. My next was to cancel my whole engagement book. My third to turn over my wares and rack my head for ideas.

I had had a long-standing order from *Granger's Weekly* for a novelette. I had always hated novelettes, as one had to wait so long for one's money and then get so little; but in the humour I then found myself I plunged into the fray, if not with enthusiasm, at least with a dogged perseverance that was almost as good. *Granger's Weekly* liked triviality and dialogue, a lot of fuss about nothing and a happy ending. I gave it to them in a heaping measure. *Dixie's Monthly*, from which I had a short story order, set dialect above rubies. I didn't know any dialect, but I borrowed a year's file and learned it like a lesson. They wrote and asked me for another on the strength of "The Courting of Amandar Jane." *The Permeator* was keen on Kipling and water, and I gave it to them—especially the water. Like all famous families, the Dundonalds had once had their day. I had travelled everywhere when I was a boy, and so I accordingly refreshed my dim memories with some modern travellers, and wrote a short series for *The Little Gentleman*: A Boy in the Carpathians, A Boy in the Tyrol, A Boy in New York, A Boy in Paris, A Boy at the Louvre, A Boy in Corsica, A Boy in the Commune. I reeled off about twenty of them.

It was a terribly dreary task, and I had moments of revolt when I stamped up and down my room, and felt like throwing my resolution to the winds. But I stuck

tightly to the ink bottle and fought the thing through. My novelette, strange to say, was good. Written against time and against inclination, it has always been regarded since as the best thing I ever did, and when published in book form outran three editions. I made a thundering lot of money—for me, I mean, and in comparison to my usual income—seldom under eighty pounds a month and often more. In four months I had repaid Grossensteck and had a credit in the bank. Three hundred pounds has always remained to me as a unit of value, a sum of agonising significance not lightly to be spoken of, the fruits of dogged industry and self-denial. All this while I had never heard a word from the Grossenstecks. At least they wrote to me often—telephoned—telegraphed—and my box at the club was choked with their letters. But I did not open a single one of them, though I found a pleasure in turning them over and over and wondering as to what was within them. There were several in Teresa's fine hand, and these tantalised me unspeakably. There was one of hers, cunningly addressed to me in a stranger's writing, that I opened inadvertently; but I at once perceived the trick and had the strength of mind to throw it in the fire unread.

Perhaps you will wonder at my childishness. Sometimes I wondered at it myself. But the wound still smarted and something stronger than I seemed to withhold me from again breaking the ice. Besides, during those long, lonely weeks, and those nights, almost as long in the retrospect, when I lay sleepless on my bed, had shown me I had been drifting into another peril no less dangerous than dependence. I had been thinking too much of the girl for my own good, and our separation had brought me to a realisation of how deeply I was beginning to care for her. I hated her, too, the pitiless wretch; so there was a double reason for me not to go back.

One night as I had dressed to dine out and stepped into the street, looking up at the snow that hid the stars and silenced one's footsteps on the pavement, a woman emerged from the gloom, and before I knew what she was doing had caught my arm. I stopped, and was on the point of roughly ordering her to let me go when I looked down into her veiled face and saw that it was Teresa Grossensteck.

"Hugo!" she said. "Hugo!"



I could only repeat her name and regard her helplessly.

"Hugo," she said, "I am cold. Take me upstairs. I am chilled through and through."

"Oh, but Teresa," I expostulated. "It wouldn't be right. You know it wouldn't be right. You might be seen."

She laid her hand, her ungloved icy hand, against my cheek.

"I have been here an hour," she said. "Take me to your rooms. I am freezing."

I led her up the stairs and to my little apartment. I seated her before the fire, turned up the lights, and looked at her.

"What have you come here for?" I said. "I've paid your father—paid him a month ago."

She made no answer, but spread her hands before the fire and shivered in the glow. She kept her eyes fixed on the coals in front of her, and put out the tips of her little slippered feet. Then I perceived that she was in a ball-gown, and that her arms were bare under her opera cloak.

At last she broke the silence.

"How cheerless your room is," she said, looking about.

"Did you come here to tell me that?" I enquired.

"No," she replied. "I don't know why I came. Because I was a fool, I suppose—a fool to think you'd want to see me. Take me home, Hugo."

She rose as she said this, and looked towards the door. I pressed her to take a little whisky, for she was still as cold as death and as white as the snow queen in Hans Andersen's tale, but she refused it.

"Take me home, please," she repeated.

Her carriage was waiting a hundred yards away. Hendricks, the footman, received my order with impassivity, and shut us in together with the unconcern of a good servant. It

was dark in the carriage and neither of us spoke as we whirled through the snowy streets. Once the lights of a passing hansom illumined my companion's face, and I saw that she was crying. It pleased me to see her suffer; she had cost me eleven weeks of misery; why should she escape scot free?

"Hugo," she said, "are you coming back to us, Hugo?"

"I don't know," I said.

"Why don't you know?"

"Oh, because——"

"That's no answer."

There was a pause.

"I was beginning to care too much about you," I said at last. "I was beginning to fall in love with you. I've got out of one false position. Why should I blunder into another?"

"Would it be a false position to love me?" she asked.

"Of course that would depend a good deal on you."

"Suppose I wanted you to?"

"Oh, but you couldn't."

"Why couldn't I?"

"But forty," I objected; "nobody loves anybody who's forty, you know."

"I do," she said, "though, come to think of it, you were thirty-nine—when—when it first happened, Hugo."

I put out my arms in the dark and caught her to me. I could not believe my own good fortune as I felt her trembling and crying against my breast. I was humbled and ashamed. It was like a dream. An old fellow like me—forty!

"It was a mighty near thing, Teresa," I said.

"I think it was—for me!" she said.

"I meant myself, sweetheart," I remarked.

"For both of us, then," she conceded, and her arms around my neck queered my dress tie for the rest of the evening.















"THE DAUGHTER OF THE TUMBRILS."

A POWERFUL STORY OF THE REIGN OF TERROR.

By WALTER E. GROGAN.

Illustrated by PAUL HARDY.

NIGHT was falling upon Paris. From the bare, gaunt garret on the sixth floor of the old house in the Rue St. Joseph one could see little of the narrow street below. Adèle de Montémar, wife of Eugène, Marquis de Montémar, stood at the window watching for her husband. She wore the dress of a peasant. Paris was in the full tide of the Reign of Terror; the streets held many perils for those who were *suspect*, and the House of Montémar had been execrated through centuries by oppressed peasants.

Suddenly a door leading to an inner apartment opened, and Madame Breneau entered. She stopped and looked at the fragile figure standing at the window, then passed on to the door leading to the narrow landing and saw that the heavy wooden bar was in place. Then she sighed. Adèle was her foster child. For the sake of those old ties, ties that years had only made stronger, and for the memory of the good Duke, Adèle's father, she had given shelter to Adèle—beautiful, loving Adèle—and to her husband, the Marquis.

Madame Breneau drew a chair to the rough, wooden table and sat down. From her cavernous pocket she drew forth a piece of knitting.

The patient, watching figure at the window stirred.

"I do not see him, nurse," Adèle said. "It is growing dusk, and he has been gone six hours."

"It takes time to arrange in these days," Madame Breneau answered. "He must be circumspect."

"You do not think they know? They could not know! He is well disguised. He wears the dress of the people." The sweet voice was tremulous with the fear that was in the hearts of all aristocrats in those days.

"Ah, no—wherefore should they know him?" Madame Breneau forced herself to cheerfulness. "He is Citizen Brisac—is it not so? Our good cousin. And we, Breneau and I, are we not good patriots? Come from the window, my child. It does no good to watch."

"I cannot. I must watch." Adèle paused, and then continued, the fear in her voice growing with her thoughts, "It grows so dusk. Why does he not come?"

"Come away, my child. You can see little of the street. Six storeys up is a long way."

"There is the turn in the road. I can see that. He must come that way from the Bureau. Ah, nurse, he should not have gone alone—the streets are full of danger!"

"Calm yourself, Marquise," said Madame Breneau.

"Hush!" cried Adèle, "the Marquise is dead. I am the Citizeness Brisac. Call me that, call me Adèle—anything but Marquise! God knows that a title is the finger of death!"

"Ay, and justly so—I say justly so!" Madame Breneau's voice grew suddenly hard, and for a moment the knitting stopped and she looked fiercely into vacancy.

"Nurse!"

The old woman softened.

"Ah, no, my child, not for you!" she cried. Then her voice grew hard again, hard with the terrible hardness of the times when mercy was blotted out. "But for the others. We have been dirt under their feet, we have been rats, we have died in our holes while they feasted; we, the people, who were dumb, but felt. Now we are dumb no longer!" Her voice rose triumphantly. It had in it the ring of the Marseillaise, the ring of the revengeful mob, of the dirty, ill-kempt multitude, who had risen and flung open the door of the Bastille, slaying, shouting, swearing, singing; mad with the madness of long waiting and sudden triumph.

"You have been wronged," the sweet voice said. "Ah, yes, I know. But—ah, he comes! No, it is not he! It is growing so dusk, and the little piece of road is so far."

"Have no fear. The Citizen Brisac must wait his turn."

"I see a man passing down the road," called the voice from the window. "He is bent. I see a man steal out from the wall and point. He wears the cap of Liberty."

Two others join him. They follow the bent man stealthily. So, they pass into the shades."

"It is not Brisac?"

"No, it is not he! But even now someone may be pointing at him, gliding out from some dark doorway, and following—following!"

"These are fancies."

"Not fancies, nurse, truth. It is a city of shadows. Now I see a crowd coming. They are dancing round something. I can see that. They are reeling and dancing. They turn up the road down which he must come. I cannot see what it is. Ah, now it is clearer—it is—oh, God!—oh, God!"

The slender, golden-haired Marquise, little more than a child, covered her eyes with her hands, and ran, shudderingly, to Madame Breneau, and hid her face in the old woman's breast.

"It was?"

"The tumbril!" The answer came in a strained whisper.

Madame Breneau put her arms round the young girl.

"He was not in it?" she enquired, hoarsely.

"No—no, I think not—I pray not! He was an old man. He stood erect, but he was an old man."

"One more," said Madame Breneau, patriot again now that the fear for her nursling was gone. "It is the will of the people. The aristocrats must die. They have had their time. They have had their feastings and their merrymakings. The guillotine is hungry—she shall make merry with red wine."

"Nurse, nurse!" cried Adèle, "why are you so terrible? What is it that has made the people drunk with blood?"

"Vengeance!"

"What can you know of that word? You lived on my father's estate. He was no tyrant. He loved all his people too well."

"Your father, the Duke, was good. I have no memory of him that does not teach me gratitude."

"Then what have you to avenge?"

"My daughter!"

"Your daughter? I did not know you had a daughter. She is dead?"

"I do not know. I do not think that she is dead."

Madame Breneau spoke with all the sorrow of a mother in her voice, and that is great.

"You do not know?"

"They robbed me of her. I had one child, a daughter. She was three years older than you. She was our only living child. The boy, who was born just before I came to you as nurse, died in four days. I wept then. I thanked God afterwards. I served you as nurse ten years. I grew to love you—but the other, she was my daughter. There is a difference, my child, a great difference. She lived with her father. She grew up beautiful. God curses the poor with beauty sometimes. When you were ten I left you, and came to Paris with my husband and my daughter. Your father was kind and liberal. I had money enough to furnish a little shop, and some to put by for my daughter's dowry."

"My dear, dear father!"

"Five years I was happy. Then an aristocrat saw that my daughter was beautiful—and—in a while she came to us and told us of her shame. My husband turned her away from our door. I have never seen her since."

"It was wicked, wicked!" cried the kneeling figure in the piny of her heart.

"Ay, but what mattered it to him? We were dogs—we were worse than dogs, for we were without feeling and without affection. The aristocrats made their pleasure out of our hearts. Now it is our turn. Do you wonder at me now?"

"No. I cannot wonder."

"You and yours were good to me. For that I shelter you and your husband. Tomorrow you will have passed out of Paris—a few days and you will be in England. Then I will know no more mercy."

"In England—if he come!"

The fear had taken nearly all hope from her.

"He will!" cried Madame Breneau; "he will! There is little risk. The Marquis is dead. There is only Citizen Brisac."

The hope in the old woman's words kindled an answering flame in the heart of the little Marquise.

"That is true," she said, "and few people know him by sight. For years he has been absent from Court." Then suddenly she bent forward as though her ears had caught some sound. "Nurse, nurse, there is a step on the stair!"

"I hear nothing."

"It comes nearer! I hear the creak. It is a light step."

The old woman rose hurriedly and hastened to the door.

"Go into the inner room, my child—go quickly," she cried.

Adèle remained listening.

"The step has reached the last flight!"

"Go quickly!"

"There is no need, nurse!" the girl cried joyously, running to the door and pulling

"Adèle," he cried, "this is not prudent! It might have been one of the mob."

"Ah," she answered, her voice vibrating with her love and her relief, "I knew your step. I should know your step from a hundred others!"

Madame Breneau bustled forward.



"You lie, citizeness. You have hidden them, you have obtained papers for them—in the name of Brisac. They were to have fled to-night."

down the bar. "Stand away! It is my husband! Eugène!" She threw open the door. "Eugène, safe—safe!"

A young man—dressed in cap, blouse, jean trousers and sabots—entered. He looked anxious. Even when he embraced his wife the anxiety, though he tried to banish it, lurked in his eyes.

"Monsieur has been successful?" she enquired.

"Jean, Madame Breneau," he corrected. "Remember, I am plain Jean now. Yes, I have been successful. Not one of the villains questioned good Breneau's cousin's right to quit Paris."

"And the diligence?"

Madame Breneau was practical.

"Will await us to-morrow, in the early dawn, on the broad white road that leads to the coast. We shall go out to-night in a country cart, two peasants returning from the market," he answered. He turned to his young wife. "And then—," he said.

"We shall be able to sleep then. There will be no more nightmares—waking nightmares. The shadows will not always take the shape of the guillotine. We shall be able to sleep then."

Madame Breneau put her hand upon the young man's arm.

"You have been circumspect, Jean?" she enquired anxiously.

"I have walked as a man with his own life and a dearer life in his hands."

"You saw nothing to render you suspicious?"

"Nothing except—no, nothing."

Adèle looked into her husband's face with an agony of entreaty. She saw in it the shadow, the shadow that was in many faces in those days, the shadow of a great fear.

"'Except,' Eugène? You said 'except.' There was something?" she breathed.

"No—nothing," he answered boldly, though the shadow still lay upon his face. "It was a fright—that was all. It made me later than I otherwise would have been. Two hours ago I was within a few streets of this, when a woman came out of a squalid court and looked at me curiously."

Adèle grew pale. She stood staring at her husband, and the little hand clutching at her throat trembled.

"Did you know her? Who was she? Oh, husband, husband, who was she?"

"It was she whom the people call 'The Daughter of the Tumbrils.'"

Madame Breneau started back in horror.

"'The Daughter of the Tumbrils!'" she exclaimed.

Adèle flung herself upon her husband's breast as though thus she would protect him against the whole world.

"Eugène, my husband," she cried, "we are lost! She is tireless, tireless! She will drag you to the scaffold!"

Eugène, Marquis de Montemar, looked at his wife, and smiled.

"Be brave, dearest," he said, "your fears are groundless, quite groundless. I own I was frightened for a moment, but she passed

on, taking no more notice of me, and vanished up another court. I thought it was prudent to walk some miles out of my way, but I believe it was unnecessary."

"You were not followed, Eugène?"

"No, oh, no. There was once——"

"Once?"

"It was a shadow behind me. It made me start. I thought it seemed like a woman's form. Pshaw! it was nothing but a shadow!"

His wife looked at him hungrily.

"It is a city of shadows," she said in a strained way.

"It would be prudent to prepare for the journey," said Madame Breneau.

"Yes, you are right, good nurse," Adèle answered. "I will be brave. Come, Eugène."

Eugène put his arm round her and walked to the door that led into the other room.

"Have you not been brave, child?" he said very tenderly. "We have been playing hide and seek with death and you have not failed."

Madame Breneau watched them until the door between the rooms was closed. Then she returned to her seat and took up her knitting. Sitting thus she muttered to herself—

"'The Daughter of the Tumbrils!' It is a bad omen to meet her! It may be that she saw nothing, but they say her scent for an aristocrat is miraculous. They say she has missed no execution. A good patriot, a loyal patriot, and yet I think she is too bloodthirsty for a woman."

A noise on the stair, far-off—but distinct. Madame Breneau raised her head to listen.

"What was that?" she muttered. "My husband does not return so early. It is certainly a step on the stair. It comes nearer."

She sat staring at the door. Then suddenly she started to her feet with a cry.

"My God! They have not barred the door!"

She sprang to the door as a hand tried the latch. The bar had been thrown down beyond her reach. She placed her foot against the door.

"Who is there?" she cried.

"Open in the name of the Republic!" shouted a harsh voice.

"If I refuse?"

"You will not, Citizeness Breneau."

"Who are you who know me?"

"One who knows everyone. Open!"

"What do you want?"

"I come on the business of the Republic."

"My husband is out, and I am alone."

"The Citizen Breneau does his duty. He is at the Tribunal, sentencing aristocrats to death. Open!"

It was a summons Madame Breneau dared not disobey. She stepped back, and a woman brushed past her roughly and strode to the centre of the room.

She was a strange figure. In the semi-

"There is work for me here," she said grimly.

Madame Breneau started back in horror.

"'The Daughter of the Tumbrils'!" she gasped.

"You know me?"

"All Paris knows you!"

"It shall know me better yet, I promise you. The streets shall run with the blood of the aristocrats, and the people shall point me out, and call me 'The Daughter of the Tumbrils, the Handmaid of the Guillotine'!"



"Go, citizeness. What is your vengeance to mine?"

darkness of the garret she looked terrible. On her head was the cap of Liberty. Her black matted hair was cut short, and there were streaks of grey in it. Her face was ashen with want and hard living; her arms, bare to the elbow, were stained and browned. Her eyes were wild, her mouth firmly set and grim. She wore a rough blue tattered bodice, a short skirt, and sabots. Round her waist was a tricolour sash in which were thrust a heavy pistol, a dagger, and an infantryman's short sword.

Her voice was low, but terrible.

"What do you want here, citizeness?"

"Citizen Montémar, once called Marquis de Montémar, and Adèle his wife."

"They are not here."

"You lie, citizeness. You have hidden them, you have obtained papers for them—in the name of Brisac. They were to have fled to-night."

Madame Breneau, startled to find all her plans known, was betrayed into crying—

"How do you know——?"

"It is the duty of the hound to know where his quarry is. Enough, they shall have their journey; oh, mark you, citizeness, they shall have their journey. They shall ride in the tumbril. Let them die, tyrants of the people! Citizeness, why are you so diligent on their behalf?"

"I was her nurse."

"Should the nursling receive consideration before the child? You had a daughter. An aristocrat ruined her."

"Heavens! You know that?"

"Citizeness, he whom you are sheltering is the man who took your daughter away."

Madame Breneau recoiled in horror, her hands outstretched as though to ward off a blow.

"It is not true!" she said hoarsely.

"Would you shelter them if you knew it were true?"

"I would sing as they rode in the tumbril!" All the mother in her sprang into her fierce, vengeful words.

"It is true. Look at me, citizeness. Five years is a long time. Look closely at me. Is there nothing you can remember? Look very closely, citizeness."

The old woman, with shaking hands, lit a candle. Twice she tried to raise it, and twice she could not. As the light fell upon the other woman's face she spoke.

"My name was Elise before they christened me 'The Daughter of the Tumbrils.'"

The old nurse dropped the candle on the table and fell on her knees, catching at the woman's passive hands, kissing them, fondling them, bathing them with her tears.

"Elise, my Elise! I know you now! My little Elise!" she cried.

The hard, low voice came again.

"They have changed me somewhat, these aristocrats. They have not improved me much. I am a living vengeance." Then with a sudden alteration in her manner she stooped over the kneeling woman. "Why do you shelter *him*?" she asked.

"Him?"

"The man who robbed you of me—Citizen Montémar?"

The old woman jumped to her feet. Her eyes blazed. She was almost as terrible as her daughter.

"And I sheltered him!" she cried. "But he shall not live! Come, Elise, vengeance!"

She caught her daughter's dagger from its sheath and held it aloft. She was mad to

avenge the loneliness and the heartache of five long years.

The daughter caught her by the arm in a firm, strong grasp.

"The vengeance is mine," she said. "Go, citizeness!" She pushed her relentlessly towards the door and the narrow stairway. "What is your vengeance to mine?" She snatched the dagger from her mother's hand. "Go, citizeness, these toys are not for you."

"I go, Elise, but I will summon the people. Do not let him slip."

"Have no fear, citizeness."

The mother went out, closing the door after her. The woman watched her. The twilight was deepening. Outside, the street was quiet. She went to the window and opened it. Holding it open with one hand, with the other she took a large square of stuff from her bosom. It was a deep red. She shut the window on one end of it so that it hung outside like a flag.

"Some good patriots will see it from below," she muttered. "It grows dark, but they have sharp eyes, the people, when my flag hangs out. Now the guillotine claims you, Eugène, you and your bride. I have sealed the contract with a blood-red seal."

She walked slowly to the table and sat on it, swinging her legs.

"They will not know of the secret passage to the other house," she mused. "I alone know that. It was useful when I stole out to meet him. They must come here. Then they will fall at my feet and pray for mercy, and they shall have the mercy that I had. It is just."

The door of the inner room opened, and the Marquis de Montémar entered. He saw dimly the figure of a woman, and supposed it to be that of Madame Breneau.

"Citizeness Breneau, we are ready. When it grows dark we will go forth."

"Citizen Montémar, the night is never so dark that we may not see an aristocrat."

Startled, he cried out, "Woman, who are you?"

"I am 'The Daughter of the Tumbrils.'"

"My God!"

"I come at the bidding of my mother, the tumbril. She wants you and the Citizeness Montémar, your wife. She is kind—she will not part you."

The man went towards the door leading to the stairway, but the woman jumped in front of him, levelling a pistol at his head.



"Citizeness, it is often more terrible to live," the woman said, in her hard, monotonous voice.

"Woman," cried the Marquise, "why do you bring death to us?"

"Tell her, Citizen Montémar."

He answered hoarsely, "I cannot. She loves me. Will not our torture—our deaths—suffice?"

"You cannot—but she shall know. Not now; she is dazed with fear."

"Why, why have you come?" wailed the Marquise.

"What matters why? I have come. I shall never go. In an hour or less the good patriots will be here, and we will ride in triumph to the prison. Ah, you shudder! It is the ante-room of death."

The Marquise shuddered. Life was very sweet to her with the love of husband. "Have you no fear?" she asked.

"I served a gun at the taking of the Bastille. I sang the Marseillaise under flying bullets. I have no fear."

"I speak of another fear—the fear of God."

"I fear nothing."

The Marquis, holding his wife very closely, looked into her eyes with a grave smile—the smile of a man who had lost hope and would meet fate bravely.

"Adèle, courage," he said. "Others have gone the road we shall go. There is a little while of pain, and after that eternity. Hand in hand we will make our journey, my fair, fair bride, hand in hand."

"If so be the Republic wills," said the woman.

"You would not have the heart to part us?" cried the Marquise.

"Citizeness, I have no heart."

"There must be some chord which, touched, would wake some gentler memory," she said.

"I have but one memory."

"And that is——?"

"One full of bitterness."

The Marquise turned to her husband. "Oh, speak to her, Eugène!" she cried. "Plead to her."

Eugène's face clouded. "It is useless, Adèle," he said.

"Citizen Montémar is right. It is useless."

"Ah, but there must be some gentler memory; there must be; there must be!" The little Marquise was agonised. "Perchance you loved?"

"Think you, Citizen Montémar, that love would plead for her?" asked the woman, hardly.

"Adèle, do not speak to her again. She is as the stones of Paris—cold, pitiless."

"Was there no love of child locked in your heart then, not dead now, not quite dead now?" The Marquise watched her face narrowly.

A curious light sprang into the woman's eyes; her face softened somewhat. "Child! Heavens! My child!" Then she became hard again. "No, no. I have sworn vengeance! I am 'The Daughter of the Tumbrils.'"

The Marquise broke from her husband's clasp, and threw herself on her knees before the woman. "Woman, for the memory of your child!" she cried.

Elise looked at the kneeling girl with a hard, fierce hatred. "Ay, kneel to me, Citizeness Montémar; weep to me, pray to me! I have done the same under wild skies, with a dying child in my arms. Only the walls and the wind heard me. They were not more insensible to me than I am to you."

The Marquis crossed the room to his kneeling wife. "Adèle, my little wife, come," he said. Then he raised her, and with his arm about her, led her very tenderly to a chair. "What others have borne we can bear. Nay, do not weep. Be brave!"

The little Marquise looked up at him with a poor, weak smile. "Thank you, Eugène. I will be brave," she said simply.

The woman, swinging her legs upon the creaking table, broke in. "There is a sound in the street below. The honest lads are coming."

"Hold my hand, Eugène," said Adèle. "See, it does not tremble now."

"Thus will we meet fate, hand in hand," said the Marquis.

"I hear men shouting. They have seen my signal."

"Death will lose his terror if I may but meet him with you, dear heart." The soft, sweet voice was growing strangely calm.

"The Tribunal will not be so cruel as this woman. They will not part us." The Marquis bent over her protectingly as he spoke.

"The day grows dark, but they have seen. We will sing the Marseillaise round the cart as you go!" The woman's voice shrilled in a hoarse triumph.

"I heard," said Adèle, "that gentle women mounted the steps with a smile."



and we walked. By the side of the bridge stood a woman."

"It was at night?"

"It was at night. There were none beside us. The woman held a baby in her arms, and looked at the river."

"It was a dark night?"

"It was a dark night, but the moon showed through the clouds every now and then. As I neared, the moon shone upon us."

"You saw the woman?"

"I saw the woman, and her eyes told me what she was doing there. They looked at the river, eagerly, wildly, sadly."

"The river tempted many women then, citizeness."

"God knows what her temptation was. It must have been great. She gazed from the rapidly-running river to the babe crying in her arms."

"The river seemed a better resting place for an innocent baby than the streets then, citizeness."

"I knew her thoughts. I left my father and went to her."

"Go on, citizeness—you spoke to her?"

"I spoke to her. I said, 'What do you want here?' And she laughed."

"The laugh of despair is a terrible thing to hear. Go on, citizeness."

"'You are going to commit a crime,' I said, 'in the face of God.' She answered, 'What is that to you?' I looked at the child. 'You would murder him.' She gazed at me wildly. 'He is mine!' she cried, 'mine! I have paid for him, paid very dearly!'"

"Yet you stood and spoke to her? There was no repulsion?"

"There was no repulsion. She was a woman even as I was. I answered her: 'The child is not yours, he is the child of God. See, I claim him for his Father.' Then I placed this crucifix upon the child's breast. I gave her my purse, and passed on. Eight months afterwards the crucifix was returned. There was a note. It said, 'The child has gone to his Father.'"

There was silence for a moment. Outside in the street were cries. Suddenly the woman spoke. Her voice had lost its hardness, it was womanly, deep, full, solemn.

"And the woman swore she would remember."

"How do you know, woman?"

"Before you became Citizeness Montémar you were ——?"

"Adèle de Bretigny."

"I did not know, I did not know! Citizeness, the woman has remembered. Go!"

"You—you are the woman?"

"I was—she was dead, but—her memory! Go!"

The Marquis, who had listened to the story with growing shame, who in the mean garret began to understand the vengeance of the people upon his class, the class which had sinned lightly, moved towards the woman.

"You would let my wife go in safety?" he enquired wonderingly.

"She has need of you, citizen. Go you as well. Go quickly while I remember. Go quickly."

"But the mob—they will be watching."

The woman jumped from the table.

"Go into your room, open the cupboard by the stove," she cried, breathlessly. "There is a knob. Touch it. It opens into the next house. I used it years ago. No one else knows of it. From there you can reach the street."

The little Marquise would have embraced the woman, but she drew back.

"Heaven bless you!" cried the Marquise.

"No, not that! I have repaid. It is the gift of one woman to another. Go!"

The Marquise went out swiftly. Even as she went the shouts of the mob came ringing upon her ears. The Marquis turned at the door, and took one step back in a hesitating and shamed manner.

"Elise," he began, "I thank——"

"Hold!" she cried. "You have nothing to thank me for. It is for her sake, your wife, and my child—*my* child."

The Marquis turned and followed his wife.

Elise, "The Daughter of the Tumbrils," stood waiting. The cries from the street increased, and there were sounds upon the stairs; the patriots were answering her signal. She turned suddenly, went to the window, flung it open, and took in the fatal square of red. They were coming up the last flight. There was a hand at the door. The door was burst in. It was her mother—a living fury. In her hand she clutched a pike, her grey hair strayed over her face, her eyes blazed.

"They are coming, Elise—the good patriots! Death to the accursed aristocrats!"

"You have come too late, citizeness. They have gone." The daughter spoke quite calmly.

"Gone!"

"There was an old debt—I have paid it, paid it very fully."

COMING MEN in the COMMONS



By HENRY W. LUCY ("Toby, M.P.").

FIRST ARTICLE.

IN the House of Commons, as in other competitive assemblies, there are various stages of arrival. A man may be said to be "coming" when he has delivered a maiden speech that commands attention. Others, having made their mark and achieved a position, are coming in the sense that they may be expected some day, sooner or later, to take their place in the front rank of statesmen and administrators. Lord Hugh Cecil belongs to the latter category. He has served his seven years' apprenticeship, and is established among masters of the art of Parliamentary debate. Whether he possesses other and quite distinct qualifications for a successful office-holder is doubtful. He is much too good for Downing Street's daily food. Moreover, in the case of Lord Cranborne the result of experiment of extending bestowal of office among the sons of Lord Salisbury is not encouraging to further effort. The paternal tendency to utterance of blazing indiscretions is apparently ineradicable.

The Prime Minister, who knows the subject thoroughly, has drawn a portrait sketch of his cousin Hugh that leaves nothing to be desired in the matter of point, accuracy, or picturesqueness. The occasion of its forthcoming was characteristic. It happened last session on the ultimate stage of the Education Bill in the House of Commons. The Lords' amendments were under discussion, and Mr. Balfour disappointed his cousin by stopping short of full approval of their lordships' work. Lord Hugh rose to make what he called "a final

protest" against destruction of the right of the incumbent of a parish to teach in a school except by consent of the lay managers. He was in bitterest mood, girding frequently at the Premier for his wanton disregard of the Papal privileges of the Protestant parish priest. Mr. Balfour, who generally treats the generous eccentricities of his cousin with extreme tenderness, was moved to equal bitterness in his reply. The situation was not soothed by Lord Hugh's frequent interruption.

Lord Hugh concluded his speech by frankly avowing intention, on behalf of himself and his friends, to do everything they could to defeat the purpose of the Bill in respect of its restraint of the autocratic power of the clergy. "My noble friend," said Mr. Balfour, turning occasionally to regard his cousin, whose extreme nervous excitement gave him the appearance of being tied up in a knot as he sat in the corner seat below the gangway, "declares that no considerations of peace will induce him and his friends to desist from agitation against this clause when the Bill is passed. From what I know of my noble friend, I am sure he is not making a boast which he will not absolutely fulfil. I do not believe that any consideration of peace will restrain him, but I must frankly say that I think him ill-advised. No man has a greater authority than my noble friend amongst a most devoted and able section of the clergy of this country. They look up to him, they follow him, especially in matters in which politics and religion are both

concerned. They regard him, and I think they rightly regard him, as the ablest exponent of their views. I think my noble friend ought to remember that, if he has thus gained and earned great power, he has with it taken upon himself a great responsibility. And as he has with great frankness told the House and the country what he thinks of the Government, I am bound honestly to tell him that I think he cannot do a worse service—I will not say to the Government and to the Party to which he belongs, because, rightly, he looks upon these considerations as inferior and subservient to those which have a higher origin. I think he is doing much more than that. He is doing a great disservice to the cause of that religious education of which he is so enthusiastic an advocate. I believe he is driving deeper the wedge which, unhappily, is separating certain classes of ecclesiastical opinion from the great body of religious lay opinion in this country, and in which I, at all events, see the greatest danger looming in the future to the cause of religion as a whole, and more especially to the cause, the welfare, and the prosperity of the Church of England."

Here, drawn by a master hand, we see presented the intellectual, fanatical churchman. Lord Hugh preserves in a utilitarian twentieth century the character of the imperious cleric of Inquisition days. Had he been born in the time of Queen Mary he would probably have been burned at the stake as a rank Protestant. Had his appearance been deferred till the reign of Queen Elizabeth, he would undoubtedly have been executed for Papistical tendencies. To do him justice, had he in either epoch possessed the power, he would, in the interests of the church he happened to belong to, have dealt out similar discipline to others. In whatever state it might have pleased Providence to call him at or about this highly-controversial epoch, he would have been in the minority, bent, at whatever cost, on saving the souls of the majority.

More closely than any of the Salisbury sons, Lord Hugh resembles the Marquis. Incredible as it will appear to those who know the two at the present day, the Member for Greenwich is in form and figure curiously like the Member for Stamford who fluttered the Parliament meeting in the middle of last century. There are many men of both Houses still living who remember the Lord

Robert Cecil of those days, with the same pale, ascetic face as that with which Lord Hugh Cecil confronts indifference to the interests of the Church, the same slim figure, the same long, gliding step.

Father and son, with the space of fifty years between their opening careers, were equally loyal to Mother Church. Consider the following passage: "I shall resist any public system of education which is not based on the truths of Revelation as a distinct and indispensable element. The events which have passed in Ireland are a sufficient warning of the futility of all educational plans in which religious instruction is not enforced, and demonstrate that such compromises do not even satisfy those in deference to whose hostility they were adopted." This is not a quotation from one of Lord Hugh Cecil's speeches on the Education Bill passed in the Autumn Session. It will be found in an address by Lord Robert Cecil (at the time having no expectations of succeeding to the Marquisate) to the electors of Stamford, whose favour he was wooing in the year 1853.

Lord Hugh has inherited the gift of exquisite phrasing that adorns his father's public speeches. Also, like his father, he is able on the spur of the moment to deliver an extemporaneous speech. When he prepares one in advance his notes are very slight, and do not confine him to narrow pathways of argument or illustration. In highly-polished phrases, every word the right one set in its proper place, he pours contemptuously on enemies of the Church, scorn on weak-kneed members of it. His oratorical action is peculiar and ungainly. In the opening passages of a speech he wrings his hands with painful force over someone's shortcomings. This is followed by the rapid horizontal movement of his outstretched right hand held palm upwards, with fingers rigidly extended. It does not mean anything save indication of a highly-wrought nature. But the action is painfully suggestive of slicing off somebody's head. His third gesture, arrived at in due course, is to assume that his unoffending left hand is the head of the adversary—say Mr. Lloyd George—and this he proceeds to punch with amazing force and rapidity of delivery.

Though wholly impracticable, representative of an extreme autocratic clerical party, Lord Hugh has come to be one of the most attractive speakers in the Commons. After



Mr. Balfour, Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Tim Healy, there is none who can so rapidly fill the House as he, nor any whose speeches are listened to with keener interest or fuller intellectual delight. One reason for this command over the most fastidious audience in the world is absolute conviction of his sincerity. Members listening know that however *outré* be his declarations he himself believes every word of them, and would cheerfully go to the stake re-affirming them.

He is obviously not the sort of man out of whom Ministers are made. Assuming him admitted to the companionship of the Treasury Bench, he would be certain within six months to quarrel with his chief or some of his colleagues on matters of conscience. The only doubt thrown on this induction arises in connection with a little manœuvre, adoption of which by Lord Hugh in the early part of the Session amazed and shocked the House. On a Wednesday afternoon Marriage with Deceased Wife's Sister Bill was before the House on the second reading. This was carried by a substantial majority that seemed to assure success to the proposal to refer it to a Select Committee. Time was everything in the matter. If the Bill were forthwith referred to a Select Committee it would, under the rules affecting Private Bills after Whitsuntide, hold an exceptionally favourable position. The division was called at a quarter-past five, leaving ample time to bring the tellers up to the table with the few minutes to spare necessary for moving the reference to the Select Committee. At half-past five on a Wednesday (this being before the new time-table came into operation) debate would be peremptorily interrupted and the Bill's chances would be lost.

On Lord Hugh Cecil's ordinarily guileless brain there flashed an idea which good churchmen would be more disposed to associate with the Nonconformist conscience. If he and the minority hostile to the Bill walked through the division lobby at the ordinary pace, they would be back before half-past five, the Bill would be referred to a Select Committee, and all would be lost. He accordingly "loitered in the Lobby," to quote the term by which the manœuvre was indignantly denounced by the outwitted friends of the Bill. The loitering lasted just long enough to bring the tellers against the Bill up to the table after the hands of the clock pointed to half-past five. According to the Parliamentary rule of honour, this

is playing a little low down, and the almost saintly character of the Member for Greenwich bestowed on the performance an added gravity.

This incident certainly seems to show that, after all, upon proper occasion, Lord Hugh would be found not lacking that adaptability to circumstance inseparable from administering a department and representing it in the House of Commons at question time.

In the smoking-room the remark is attributed to Mr. Arthur Balfour that "Life would be passable only for its cousins." This is doubtless as apocryphal as Wellington's "Up Guards, and at 'em," "The Tenth never dance," and the like. But it must be admitted that a substratum of fact underlies the fanciful structure. Through the long debate on the Education Bill, Cousin Hugh was a sore thorn in the flesh. His ability, his pertinacity, and—a consideration not to be left out of account—his Cecilship, combined to make him a formidable adversary. The Premier up to the last treated him with the gentleness an elder brother shows to a wayward cadet. It was only at the very last he broke out, and then over the sarcasm of his speech he threw the garment of high personal praise.

With Cousin Cranborne the case is different. He is not only a Cecil, but holds the reversion to its headship. Moreover, he is a Minister, and with characteristically fantastic temerity, his father being resolved, as it was cynically put at the time, to strengthen his Government, made him Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs. Next to being full Secretary of State, with a seat in the Cabinet, this particular post is the most important in the House of Commons. Colleagues of similar rank at the Home Office, the Board of Trade, even at the War Office or the Admiralty, may muddle and blunder without shaking the universe. But the Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, his chief being in the House of Lords, can, as Lord Cranborne has more than once testified, make things hum beyond the limits of these islands.

His remark in debate on a critical turn in affairs in the Far East will ever keep his memory green. There was question of Treaties, strong representations being made from both sides of the House as to the desirability of drawing closer friendly bonds with Japan by a specific Treaty. Had Japan been invited to enter upon such an



undertaking? Whereat the noble whipper-snapper standing at the Ministerial box in the House of Commons turned scornfully upon his interlocutor and said, "We do not ask for Treaties ; we grant them."

It was magnificent ; it was Salisburian, but it was not diplomacy. Lord Lansdowne felt the necessity of taking early opportunity of endeavouring to explain away the indiscretion of his junior. In effect he told Japan that "it was only Fanny's pretty way." But these ways, wandering over the barbed fenced field of diplomacy, are apt to lead to disaster.

If promotion went by merit, and in the interest of the State it were felt imperative to give another scion of the House of Cecil to its service, it is not the ex-Premier's eldest son who would now be seated on the Treasury Bench. But primogeniture has its rights as well as its duties, and Lord Cranborne sits on the Treasury Bench Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, bound some day to go up even higher.

In other capacity he would do very well indeed. He would, for example, make an excellent private Member. As a speaker he has vastly improved with practice, though still falling short of the supremacy in debate of his younger brother. Haughtily shy, he is habitually *gauche*, saying the wrong thing in the worst manner at the most inconvenient moment. Beneath this manner, which even more assuredly than reading and writing comes by nature, there are sterling qualities which time and experience may ripen. He has those qualities of innate honesty and uncompromising truth-telling (according to his lights) which command the respect of the House of Commons. He has also the faculty of taking pains, and shirks no labour connected with his office. In brief, when in the course of events he takes his seat in the House of Lords, he will be something above the average level of the Peerage, and might, if he unreservedly gave himself up to the task, do something to relieve the Upper Chamber from its pervading dulness.

That consummation devoutly to be wished would be achieved if he took office, more especially if the post selected were that for which he is now apparently in training at the Foreign Office. During the last few years of leadership of the third Marquis of Salisbury in the House of Lords, the Premier's interposition in debate on whatsoever subject was a matter of acute anxiety to his more commonplace colleagues.

They never knew what he might not say before he resumed his seat. In this respect the fourth Marquis of Salisbury, in charge of the seals of the Foreign Office, might be expected to eclipse the fame of his father.

There is another and a better way. Since the spacious times of Elizabeth, the Cecils have enjoyed, have, in truth, honourably won, a fair share of the fat things of Ministerial office. According to that impartial and dispassionate observer, Mr. "Tommy" Bowles, the Fourth Administration of the lineal descendant of Queen Elizabeth's great counsellor erred a little in this direction by overdoing things. The Fourth Marquis could well afford to stand aside, leaving the prizes for less accustomed hands.

For the House of Cecil the attractions of Ministerial office do not rest upon the sordid considerations that govern lesser folk. For centuries they have belonged to the governing classes, and have hereditary hunger for power. In Parliament power is not necessarily connected with place. Now that Lord Salisbury has practically withdrawn from the scene, the most powerful man in the House of Lords is the Earl of Rosebery, who, as we know, elects to plough a lonely furrow. No one rising in debate is listened to more eagerly. It would be too much to say that his views and arguments influence votes. Paradoxical as it may appear in connection with what is avowedly a debating assembly, cases where that miracle is wrought either in Lords or Commons are exceedingly rare. But Lord Rosebery's speeches distinctly turn the current of debate in the House of Lords, and have their effect on public opinion outside. Of public men, the one most successful in resisting the influence of Lord Rosebery's speeches, as far as influence is discernible in action, is Lord Rosebery himself.

Lord Cranborne, even as Marquis of Salisbury, will never reach the altitude of Lord Rosebery, undermined though it be by a certain curious irresolution. But the rôle of Independent Member, a sort of Providence sitting up aloft looking after the business of the Peers and welfare of the nation, would suit him admirably. He might then without danger, with distinct advantage to current debate, cultivate inherited germs of blurting out inconvenient truths, and might think aloud about his fellow-men, particularly his



personal friends and former colleagues, habits that made his distinguished father so interesting in the House of Lords and on the public platform.

Crossing the floor of the House, we find another coming man in Sir Edward Grey. Some years ago, when that middle-aged young man's position in the House of Commons was made in private conversation the subject of passing remark, Mr. Gladstone said, "Edward Grey might be anything he liked in public life. But he prefers to go a-fishing." That sums up the story of a life as far as it has gone. Like the Cecils, he comes of a family who have made their mark on Parliament and the history of the country. Grandson of Sir George Grey, grand-nephew of the second Earl Grey, much was expected of the Member for Berwick-on-Tweed.

Nor has expectation been disappointed. Sir Edward is an admirable speaker, there being about his utterances that subtle flavour of statesmanship lacking to Mr. Caldwell or even to Mr. Channing. For three years Sir Edward filled the office now occasionally electrified by Lord Cranborne. It is unnecessary to say that during that period he never fluttered the dovescotes at Tokio, St. Petersburg, Berlin or elsewhere. He has the placid mind and temperament that go to make a first-class judge. Therein something is lacking to success in political life, where occasional warmth and colour are desirable accessories. Sir Edward Grey belongs to the limited class of Parliament men who are listened to with equal pleasure and attention on both sides. A stout Liberal, political partisanship is wholly foreign to his nature.

During his fighting time, Nelson had an ungovernable personal hatred for the French people. Whilst waiting for their ships in the Mediterranean he wrote home, "I trust Almighty God will in Egypt overthrow these pests of the human race." That was

unreasonable, illogical. But the personal sentiment lent fresh force and energy to Nelson's arm at Aboukir and Trafalgar. Sir Edward Grey, contemplating honourable gentlemen seated opposite in the House of Commons, thinks they are mistaken on particular subjects, but concedes that they are well-meaning, and include in their ranks some really good fellows.

If he followed natural disposition he would doubtless retire from Parliament and political life, withdraw to Falloden, bring out a new edition of his valuable work on fly-fishing, or peradventure write a treatise on tennis. *Noblesse oblige*. A Grey of Northumberland must take his place in Parliament, his seat on one of the two Front Benches. The current of Sir Edward's political career has of late years been sorely troubled by schisms in his political household. He has no sympathy with the practice of sub-dividing an already small minority into hostile dinner-parties given at rival restaurants. But when the Guelphs and the Ghibellines fall out, he must needs, though not vivaciously taking part with either, stroll over into one or other of the hostile camps. Naturally he has followed Lord Rosebery, who is quite good enough Liberal for him, and whose views on Imperial affairs are distinctly sound.

Sir Edward Grey has scarcely reached the prime of life. He has behind him an honourable past; before him a future leading direct to the family heritage of the Premiership. What is necessary to accomplishment of this dream is that he should less sedulously give up to the trout-stream and the tennis-court what was meant for mankind. There is only one recorded case where Simon Peter said "I go a-fishing." A little later it is written "Simon Peter girt his fisher's coat unto him, and did cast himself into the sea."

This is what Edward Grey should do. Gird his coat about him, and throw himself into the sea of politics.





RACE COURSE SWINDLES

THE SEAMY SIDE OF A GREAT SPORT

By W. J. WINTLE.

"NOW I'll bet any sportin' gent from a bob up to a quid that he won't tell which thimble the little pea is under!"

It was a raucous-voiced individual, somewhat seedily clad, who issued this open challenge on the occasion of the Little Muggleton Race Meeting.

Before him stood a small folding table covered with green baize, and upon this he was busily manipulating three thimbles and a pea. With a rapid, sweeping motion he placed first one thimble and then another over the pea, finally leaving the latter obviously under the middle thimble.

"Here y'are, gents! Here's a chance for a sportsman to make a bit. I lay any odds from a tanner up to a fiver that there ain't a sportsman 'ere wot can tell which thimble the little pea is under. Why, it's the simplest thing in the world. Any gent wot watched must 'ave seen me put it under the middle thimble, and"—raising it—" 'ere it is! Now, who's goin' to try his luck?"

Once more the thimbles are manipulated, and again it is the middle one that is placed in the most barefaced fashion over the pea. Mr. John Muggins, who thinks himself a remarkably sharp person, has been closely watching the business, and now sees his opportunity.

"I'll bet you half-a-sovereign that it's under the middle one," he exclaims. The wager is promptly accepted, and Mr. Muggins is invited to raise the middle thimble himself, to "show that there is no deception!" He does so, and finds it empty. The proprietor of the thimbles then raises one of the others, and there is the pea!

Now it would not have mattered which thimble Mr. Muggins might choose to put his money on. In any case he would lose, for the simple reason that there was no pea

under either of the thimbles! The thing is an arrant swindle from first to last.

Thimble-rigging—as it is called—is a feat of pure sleight-of-hand, and is not dependent upon apparatus in any way whatever. All that is needed is the dexterity that comes from constant practice.

When the "sharp" pretends to place the thimble over the pea, he does it with a sweeping movement, bringing the thimble down tilted forward slightly in front of the pea, and instead of covering the pea with the thimble he instantly clips it between the second and third fingers. It is thus quite concealed from the audience, but our illustration, which represents the hand as its owner sees it, shows clearly how the pea is held.

The "flat" who makes his bet and raises a thimble, of course finds nothing under it. How, then, does the pea come to be under one of the other thimbles when the "sharp" raises it? Simply by a reversal of the process that we have just described. As the thimble is raised, the pea—which has been all the while held between the fingers—is neatly dropped under it, and appears to have been there all the time.

The trick is a very easy one to perform, but it requires long and repeated practice to do it so quickly and neatly as to make detection impossible.

There is another method of working this swindle, which is even more clever than that which has been described. Not long ago one of our most dexterous sleight-of-hand exhibitors invented a little trick, in which a small ball or pea is placed under a walnut-shell and mysteriously vanishes. As the ball is unquestionably placed under the shell, its disappearance is rather startling, but the secret is easily explained.











Figure 1. The four quadrants of a book cover

the four quadrants of a book cover. The top-left quadrant shows a dark, textured surface. The top-right quadrant shows a lighter, textured surface. The bottom-left quadrant shows a dark, textured surface with a small, light-colored rectangular label. The bottom-right quadrant shows a lighter, textured surface with a small, light-colored rectangular label.

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Figure 2. The bottom-left quadrant of a book cover

Figure 3. The bottom-right quadrant of a book cover





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bundle of whalebone and hickory. And should this boat, a few minutes later, go whirling along in the "Race," bottom side up, with every worker safe astride her keel, principally because of Captain Bob's coolness and skill in hauling them out of the water, again the last man to crawl beside the rescued crew would be this same long-legged, long-armed skipper.

Or should a guy-rope snap with a sound like a pistol shot, and a great stone swung to a boom and weighing tons should begin running amuck through piles of cement, machinery and men, and some one of the working gang, seeing the danger, should, with the quickness and sureness of a mountain goat, spring straight for the stone, clutching the end of the guy and bounding off again, twisting the bight round some improvised snubbing-post, thus checking its mad career, you would not have had to ask his name twice.

"Cap'n Bob stopped it, sir," was sure to have been the proffered reply.

So, too, in his present occupation of pilot.

It was only a few years ago that I stood on the deck of an incoming liner, straining my eyes across a heaving sea, the horizon lost in the dull haze of countless froth-caps. We had slowed for a pilot, so the word came down the deck. Suddenly, against the murky sky-line, with mainsail double-reefed and jib close-hauled, loomed a light craft plunging bows under at every lurch. Then a chip the size of your hand broke away from the frail vessel, and a big wave, lying around for such prey, sprang upon it with wide open mouth. The tiny bit dodged and slipped out of sight into a mighty ravine, then mounted high in the air, upborne in the teeth of another great monster, and again was lost to view. Soon the chip became a bit of driftwood manned by two toy men working two toy oars like mad, and bearing at one end a yellow dot.

Then the first officer walked down the deck to where I stood, followed by a huddle of seamen, who began unrolling a rope ladder.

"You're right," I heard an officer answer a passenger. "It's no fit weather to take a pilot. Captain wouldn't have stopped for any other boat but No. 11. But those fellows out there don't know what weather is."

The bit of driftwood now developed into a yawl. The yellow dot broadened and

lengthened to the semblance of a man standing erect and unbuttoning his oilskins as he looked straight at the steamer rolling port-holes under, the rope ladder flopping against her side. Then came a quick twist of the oars, a sudden lull as the yawl shot within a boat's length of the rope ladder, and with the spring of a cat the man in oilskins landed with both feet on its lower rung, and the next instant he was over the steamer's rail and on her deck beside me.

I thought I knew that spring, even before I saw his face or got hold of his hand.

It was Captain Bob.

As I look at him now, sitting in my office chair, the smoke of the cigar curling about his bronzed, weather-tanned face, my eye taking in his slim waist, slender thighs and long, sinewy arms and hands that have served him so well all his life, I can hardly believe that twenty years have passed over his head since we worked together on Shark Ledge. But for the marks chalked on his temples by the Old Man with the Hour-glass, and the few tally-scores of hard work crossing the corners of his mouth and eyes, he has the same external appearance as in the old days. Even these indices of advancing years are lost when he throws his head up and laughs one of his spontaneous, ringing laughs that fills my office full of sunshine, illumining it for hours after he has gone.

"This pilotin' 's pretty rough sometimes," Captain Bob continued between the puffs of smoke, "but it ain't nothin' to the old days. When I look back on it all, seems to me as if we was out o' our heads most o' the time. I didn't know it then, but 'twas true all the same. Think now o' layin' the *Screamer* broadside on that stone pile at Shark Ledge, unloadin' them stones with nothin' but a couple o' spar buoys to keep 'er off. Wonder I didn't leave 'er bones there. Would if I hadn't knowed every stick o' timber in 'er and jest what she could stagger under."

"But she was a good sea-boat," I interpolated. "'The *Screamer* was always the pride of the work."

"None better. You'd a-thought so if you'd been with us that night in the Bay o' Biscay; we layin' to, hatches battened down. I never see it blow wuss. It came out o' the nor'west 'bout dark, and 'fore mornin' I tell ye it was a-bumpin' things. We started with a pretty decent set o' sails, new eyelets rove in and new clew lines, but, Lord love ye, we hadn't taken old Biscay into consideration.





agents in Hamilton and draw two-thirds of my contract. That twenty-one-ton chunk, I forgot to tell ye, I had picked up the day before, and it was then aboard the *Screamer*, and we was on our way down to Hamilton, where the brig lay, when her nose scraped off the admiral's paint.

"It did look kind o' nasty for us, and no mistake. One day more, and we'd 'a' been through and had our money.

"Go up and see him," said the watchman. "He gits cool sometimes as sudden as he gits hot." So Bill Nevins, my engineer, who was workin' the h'ister, and I went up. The old feller was sittin' on the piazza in a big rattan chair.

"Come aboard," he hollered, soon's he see Bill and me a-standin' in the garden path with our hats off, lookin' like two gaolbirds about to be sentenced. Well, we got up in the porch, and he looked us all over and said :

"Have you got that money with you?" "No," I said, "I haven't," and I ups and tells 'im just how we was fixed, and how we had worked, and how short we was of grub and clothes and money, and then I said, 'an' now I've come to tell ye that I hit the dock fair and square, and it was all my fault, and that I'll pay whatever you say is right when I put this stone 'board and get my pay.'

"He looked me all over—I tell you I was pretty ragged; nothin' but a shirt and trousers on, and they was tore badly—and Bill was no better. We'd 'bout used up our clo'es so that sail needles nor nothin' else wouldn't a-done us no good, and we had no time nor no spare cash to go ashore and get others.

"While I was a-talkin', the old feller's eyes was a-borin' into mine—then he roared out, 'No, sir; you won't!—you won't pay one darned shillin', sir. You'll go back to your work, and if there's anything you want in the way of grub or supplies send here for it and you shall have it. Good day.' I tell ye he was a rum one."

"Was that the last time you saw him?" I asked.

"Not much. When we got 'longside the brig the next day, her cap'n see that twenty-one-ton stone settin' up on the deck of the *Screamer*, lookin' like a big white church, and he got so scared he went ashore and started a yarn that we couldn't lift that stone sixteen feet in the air, and over the rail and down into the hold, but that we'd smash his brig, and it got to the admiral's ears, and

down come two English Engineers, in cork helmets and white jackets and gold buttons, spic an' span as if they'd stepped out of the chart-room of a yacht. One was a colonel and the other was a major. They were both just back from India, as natty-lookin' chaps as you ever saw. And clear stuff all the way through—you could tell that before they opened their mouths.

"I was on the deck of the *Screamer*, overhaulin' the fall, surrounded by most of the crew, gettin' ready to h'ist the stone, when I first saw 'em. They and the cap'n were away up above me, leanin' over the rail, lookin' at the stone church that some o' the boys was puttin' the chains round. Bill Nevins was down in the fo'c's'le, firin' up, with the safety-valve set at 125 pounds. He had half-a-barrel o' rosin and a can o' paraffin to help out with in case we wanted a few pounds extry in the middle of the tea party. Pretty soon I heard one of 'em holler :

"Ahoy! Is the captain aboard?"

"He is," I said, steppin' out. "Who wants him?"

"Colonel Throckmorton," he says, "and Major Severn."

"Come aboard, gentlemen," I says.

"So down they come, the colonel first, one foot at the time touchin' the ladder, the major following. When he reached the deck and wheeled around to look at me, you just ought to have seen his face.

"Are you the captain?" he says, and he looked me over 'bout as the admiral had done.

"I be," I said, "Captain Robert Brandt, Lymeport, Cornwall, master and owner of the sloop *Screamer*, at your service"—I kep' front side to him. "What can I do for you?"

"Well, captain," he began, "perhaps it is none of our business, but the captain of the brig here," and he pointed up above him, "has asked us to look over your tackle and see whether it is safe enough to lift this stone. He's afraid you'll drop it and smash his deck in. Since I've seen it, and what you propose to lift it with, I've told him there's no danger, for you'll never get it off the deck. We are both officers of the Engineer Corps, and it is our business to know about such things."

"What makes you think the *Screamer* won't lift it?" I asked.

"Well," says the colonel, looking aloft, "her boom ain't big enough, and that Manilla rope is too light. I should think it wasn't over three-and-three-quarter-inch rope. We





"Down she come with a run, struck the big timbers on the deck, and by Jiminy! ye should a-heard that old brig groan from stem to stern.

"I jumped on top of the stone and threw off the shackles, and the *Screamer* came up on an even keel as easy as a duck ridin' the water.

"You just oughter seen the colonel when the old boat righted herself, and he had climbed up and stood 'longside the major a-talkin' it over.

"Pretty soon he came up to where I was a-gettin' the tackle ready to lower the stone in the hold, and he says:

"Well, you made your word good, cap'n; it would cost me my commission if I should try to do what you have done.'

"Well, gentlemen,' I says, 'what was wrong about it? What's the matter with the *Screamer's* rig?'

"Well, the size of the rope for one thing,' says the colonel, 'and the boom.'

"Well, p'rhaps you ain't looked it over,' I says, and I began unravelling an end that stuck out near the shackle. 'If you'll look close here'—and I held the end of the rope up—'you'll see that every stran' of that rope is made of the best Manilla yarn, and laid as smooth as silk. I stood over that rope myself when it was put together. Old Sam Hanson of Lymeport made up that rope, and there ain't none better nowhere. I knew what it had to do, and I warn't going to take no chances of its not doin' it right. As to that boom, I want to tell ye that I picked that boom out o' about two hundred sticks in Tom Carlin's shipyard, in Stonington, and had it scraped and ironed just to please me. There ain't a rotten knot in it from butt to finish, and mighty few of any other kind. That stick's *grooved right*—that's what's the matter with it; and it bellies out in the middle, just where it ought to be thickest.'

"Well, they didn't say nothin' for a while, 'cept to walk round the stone once or twice and slap it with their hands, as if they wanted to make sure it was all there. My men were all over it now, and we was gettin' things in shape to finish up. I tell ye the boys were mighty glad, and so was I. It had been a long pull of six months' work, and we were out o' almost everything, and as soon as the big stone was down in the brig's hold, and warped back and stowed with the others—and that wouldn't take but a day or two

more—we would clean up, get our money, and clear out for home.

"All this time the colonel and the major were buzzin' each other off by the other rail. Pretty soon they both come over to where I stood, and the colonel reached out his hand.

"Cap'n Brandt,' he says—and he had a look in his face as if he meant it—and he did, every word of it—'it would give Major Severn and myself great pleasure if you would dine with us to-night at the Canteen. The admiral is coming, and some brother officers who would be pleased to know you.'

"Well, I was struck all of a heap for a minute, knowing what kind of clo'es I had to go in, and so I says:

"Well, gentlemen, that's very nice of you, and I see you mean it, and if I had anything fit to wear there's nothin' I would like better; but ye see how I'm fixed,' and I lifted my arms so he could see a few holes that he might a-missed afore, and I motioned to some other parts of my get-up that needed repairs.

"That doesn't make any difference, cap'n, what kind of clo'es you come in. We dine at eight o'clock.'

"Of course, I knew I couldn't go, and I didn't want 'em to think I intended to go when I didn't, so I says, rather positive-like:

"Very much obliged, gentlemen, but I think you'll have to count me out this time.' I knowed I warn't fit to sit at anybody's table, especially if that old admiral was comin'.

"The colonel see I was in earnest, and he stepped up, quick-like, and laid his hand on my shoulder.

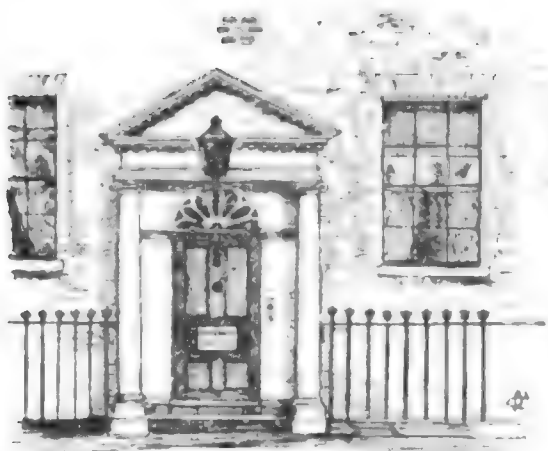
"Captain Brandt,' he says, 'we ain't worryin' about your clo'es, and don't you worry. You can come in your shirt; you can come in your socks, or you can come without one blessed rag—only come.'

The captain stopped, shook the ashes from his cigar, slowly raised himself to his feet, and reached for his hat.

"Did you go, captain?" I asked.

The captain looked at me for a moment with one of those quizzical glances which so often light up his face when something amuses him, and said, as he blew a cloud of smoke to the ceiling:

"Well, I didn't forget my manners. When it got dark—dark, mind ye—I went up and sat on the piazza and had a smoke with 'em—admiral and all. But I didn't go to dinner—not in them clo'es."



The TRAINING of a DOCTOR

AN INFORMATIVE PRACTICAL ARTICLE.

By M.D.

WHEN a young man decides to adopt the profession of medicine as his career in life, he has before him a bewildering variety of roads, all leading to the same goal—enrolment on the register of the General Medical Council. It is this enrolment which enables him to practise at a profit. Anyone, qualified or unqualified, may prescribe for the sick or perform surgical operations, subject to great disadvantages in case he is not registered. For instance, he may be punished for manslaughter should his patient die, and he has no legal power to recover fees.

To become a registered practitioner one must first give proof of having some knowledge of English, Latin, mathematics, and either Greek or a modern language; then he must study medicine for five years; and at the end of that period he must pass an examination entitling him to a diploma or degree.

There are two classes of diplomas—those granted by the Royal Colleges of Physicians and of Surgeons, and those granted by the Universities. The latter, alone, entitle a man to call himself "Doctor"; usually they imply a better general education, but they involve the same course of medical and surgical study. Therefore, in point of skill, the only thing that differentiates one medical man from another, whatever his qualification, is personal ability.

If we follow the course of a medical student, from the time when his parents determine his career until he settles down to practise, it will be seen that the making of a doctor is a matter of long and hard work and of considerable expense.

The first thing to consider is whether the boy (or girl) is suited for the profession.

Many parents make a mistake here, with the consequence that a large number of candidates never reach the goal. Some break down under the trying work, others lack the steady application which is so essential in this science, in other cases still the money runs out, and often the student develops real distaste for the study of anatomy, or physiology, or disease. The necessary qualifications of a student are, firstly, a sound constitution; secondly, keen sight, hearing and touch; thirdly, a taste for scientific work; fourthly, perseverance; and fifthly, tact, for without a knowledge of men the most brilliant physician may starve. Dr. Keetley says the successful medical man should have judgment (for correct diagnosis), decision (for operations), memory (for dry facts), and a cheerful face (to please his patients). Lastly, there must be sufficient money available and, in the majority of cases, the sum should be over, rather than under, £1,000.

Supposing all these conditions are satisfied, it will be of future advantage if the boy's studies are ordered during his school years, with a bias towards the needs of his professional course. For instance, he will find it of great after service to study Latin, German, botany, zoology, physics, chemistry, drawing, and perhaps shorthand.

This is really the first stage. The second commences when it is time to leave school. And it must now be determined whether he shall pass through a University and finally take the degrees of M.D. and M.S., or whether he will be content with the L.R.C.P. and M.R.C.S. which is the diploma conferred by the Royal Colleges of Physicians and of Surgeons. In the latter case, after a comparatively easy preliminary examination he





reptiles, etc. In chemistry, a subject of great and increasing importance, he will learn, among other things, to discover poisons by appropriate tests, to identify blood-stains and so forth. In physics he will acquire a fair knowledge of heat, light and electricity. By the following March he ought to be prepared to pass the examination in biology, and in July the examination in physics and chemistry, while pharmacy may be completed then or deferred until later on.

The second year also commences in October, and its main subjects of study will be anatomy and physiology.

Anatomy will be learned in four ways—by attending lectures, dissecting, studying frozen sections, and reading at home. Usually the student reads up at night the work he has to do on the following day, as well as reviews the work of the day just finished. After breakfast he will make a bee-line for the dissecting-room and spend as many hours as possible looking for thread-like nerves among masses of fat, tracing the course of blood-vessels, noting how they lie with relation to muscles and bones, where muscles are attached, how they pass under and over one another—in fact, getting to know the exact position of the thousand and one components of our extremely complex body. It is a puzzling task and requires practice and a fine memory.

Physiology is taken up at the same time. Of late years this subject has become one of the most important in the whole medical science. It is an immense and difficult, but fascinating, study. Physiology treats of the circulation of the blood, the process of digestion, the functions of the heart, lungs, liver, spleen, the action of brain nerves, muscles, in short, the whole of the processes of life in the healthy human body. Lectures, practical work, and reading at home will also be gone through in this science. Thirdly, the student will apply himself to histology, which is minute anatomy. It is studied by observing little shavings of the various body tissues under the microscope, so that one can tell by its structure whether the shaving is a piece of heart, liver, kidney, muscle, bone or anything else.

By the end of the second year the student will be ready for his second examination, comprising anatomy, physiology and histology. That being passed in July, the real study of the diseases and their cure will commence in the following October. But just as the student

obtained some acquaintance with anatomy during his chemistry and physics year, so he will probably have gone through the hospital wards and witnessed operations during his anatomy year, and tried to pick up a little medical and surgical knowledge.

He now has two-and-a-half or three years in which to pack his mind with professional knowledge, and the quantity he must put in is astonishing.

There are the medical wards of the hospital to be attended daily, where the physician describes to his large class the various cases of disease, such as enteric fever, acute rheumatism, bronchitis, pneumonia, heart disease, tuberculosis, and many scores of common and rare maladies. Then there are the special wards, or perhaps a separate hospital, which must be visited for the purpose of studying the rabidly infectious diseases, such as diphtheria, typhus fever, measles, etc. There are the wards where diseases which specially affect women and children are observed. There is the out-patient room, where the student sees the minor ailments, as well as serious diseases in their earliest stage.

Then there are the surgical wards containing patients with broken legs, amputated arms, stabs, burns, gunshot wounds, ulcers, etc. Skin diseases, such as eczema, psoriasis, and the like, have to be studied, and very difficult their study is. Diseases of the eye, the ear and the throat must be mastered. Operations must be attended, and they will be of many varieties, from removing a finger or a cataract to cutting off both legs or opening up the body. At the same time the student will have to be present at *post-mortem* examinations, and learn to tell whether a man found drowned was in fact drowned, or first killed and then thrown into the river; whether a knock-down blow was directly the cause of death, or the victim really succumbed to excitement and a weak heart, etc.

Lectures are going on during this period on medicine, surgery, pathology, midwifery, therapeutics, pharmacy, legal medicine, public health, etc., and the student has to attend a prescribed number in each course.

But this is not all. He must learn pathology, which treats of the changes undergone by the different parts of the body in disease. He must become thoroughly acquainted with bacteriology or the science of microbes, go through a course of practical vaccination, learn hygiene, which includes such things as





Figure 1. Dog in the dark.

















on in search of flowers, she came upon an old vine. The grapes were small and very sour, but she was as pleased as if she had stumbled upon a gold mine. It meant food and life to them until she could earn some money. The site had evidently been some great man's garden, and the vine had probably been planted when the Via Appia had resounded to the measured tramp of victorious legions. She carried the selected blossoms back to the hut, and Gio stood by munching his breakfast, while she sorted the cuttings into neat bunches set off with fringes of maidenhair and hart's-tongue. She was fortunate that morning. There were several parties of tourists out along the Appian Way, and a kind Englishman gave her a silver coin for a few bunches. She got nothing else that day, but she was more than satisfied.

An English shilling would go a long way where there was no house rent or King's taxes to eat it up. The vow to the Virgin was not forgotten. A candle was duly purchased, not the smallest of those offered for sale either, and little Gio went with her to the Chapel of St. Sebastian, where they placed it before the sacred image of Mary. This done they went home with their many purchases—bread, oil, a salted herring, and various vegetables. The keeper of the roadside store, though he would have robbed a visitor and gloated over the fact, was quite honest with her. He took the shilling, which he put into his mouth for safety while he supplied her wants, and when they were paid for she still had a little money left. Her heart fairly sang as she walked home: the future seemed as clear as the day.

Flower selling, however, was not always so lucrative. Many days she took nothing at all. She could not be so pushing as the other flower sellers, for she was cast in a different mould and easily rebuffed. When her lip quivered and the tear started to her eye, little Gio would clasp her hand tighter and assure her of success on the morrow. Still, they lived fairly comfortably during the autumn; she was even able to put by a few coins for the winter months, but it was only by denying herself her proper quantity of food. The pinch was soon felt in the cold weather. She dare not light a fire during the day lest the smoke should discover her abode and bring the tax collector down upon her. How little Gio used to long for night and the fire. The cold was

soon forgotten when the fragrant blue smoke curled up to the roof, and the warmth brought comfort to his naked feet. Sometimes in winter she was able to snare birds. The lad always cried when his mother killed them, but his hungry eyes would watch them greedily as they roasted over the wood blaze, for she took care that his little stomach was filled, even if her own remained empty.

In this way she struggled on for three years, but the privations of the first winter planted the seeds of disease and death. The third winter laid her up. When the spring came and tourists haunted the Via Appia, she was scarcely able to walk. Gio had to gather the flowers now. His mother made up the bunches with the same care, but the visitors somehow did not buy from him as they did from her. They noticed the lad with the bright face, the sad, dark eyes and the mass of black curls, and gave him kind words, but they bought their flowers from the girls. So the bouquets of violets, and ox-eyed daisies and saffron-coloured dragon's mouth were brought home again in the evening, and a torrent of passionate weeping would tell the stricken woman that he had taken nothing. He would lay his head close to hers while her arm encircled him, and protest that he was not hungry; but she knew, and she generally contrived to have a crust for him somehow. Many a day she went without any food at all so that she might have something for little Gio if he were unsuccessful; and she forgot her own gnawing pain when he nestled by her side and sobbed himself to sleep over his disappointment.

The summer dragged on. No one came near the little hut. She was now practically confined to her bed, and Gio had everything to do for her. With a pang at her heart, she noticed the lad was getting paler. She prayed that she might be spared until he was a few years older. It was so dreadful, the thought that her little Gio would be left all alone when the dark, cold nights came on again, for he was a sensitive, nervous child. As the thought grew upon her, she prayed that God would take him, too, when her time came.

One evening she was feeling at her worst, for she had no bread for Gio. He came home flushed and excited, so much so that for a time she could not grapple with the torrent of words he poured out.



soon as he awoke. He lay thinking for a time, then he called to his mother, but there was no response. He got up, not with a bound as he generally did, for he was afraid of breaking the stillness that reigned. He looked at his mother. "Ah, she is still asleep," he said. When he kissed her he noticed that her face was very cold. He had never gone out yet without her kissing him, and he wondered whether he should awake her, but he knew she had not been sleeping well lately, and though it cost him an effort to keep back the tears that would find their way to his eyes, he crept quietly out of the hut, and then bounded off in the direction of the city, so as to catch the vehicles as they came out of the great Porta. Soon he was racing after the carriages, standing on his head, turning wonderful cart-wheels, laughing and shouting, and performing all kinds of monkey antics for the edification of the tourists, who roared at the merry-hearted little fellow and threw him small coins. He was very lucky that day, but the thought that his mother had not kissed him that morning troubled him at times when he was not turning somersaults. Somehow the world always appeared better, and the prospect brighter, from that position, and he frequently turned somersaults just for the fun of the thing, and to chase away gloomy thoughts. He longed for the close of day, so that he might rush back to her. In spite of plenty of work, the hours dragged slowly by, but he could not leave his occupation while there was the chance of earning a copper.

At last, far away, the great bell of S. Peter's began to boom and clang: immediately the lighter trebles of a hundred churches took up the strain; while the little village chapels chimed in their shrill addition to the chorus that called the faithful to evening prayer. Gio was passing the chapel of S. Sebastian at the time, the same where his mother had offered the candle at the shrine of the Virgin three years ago. He was jingling the coins in his pocket as an accompaniment to the bells, when suddenly an idea struck him, and he stopped.

"Yes," he said to himself, "all the rich tourists are pleased when I do it, surely it will please her more than a candle." He pulled off his hat, and on tip-toe entered the little chapel. How quiet and still the place seemed: and so deliciously cool.

Kneeling down before the statue of the Virgin, he stammered the prayers that he had learnt at his mother's knee. In simple, earnest faith he told of the cold of winter, and asked that his mother and he might soon leave the hut, and that he might go wherever she went. He glanced up at the figure. There was a smile on her face and he fancied that it was for him. It was a smile like his mother's, sad, yet sweet. Candles were burning at her feet, and there was an abundance of flowers, but he had a much better offering to make.

He got up from his knees, tightened his belt, and the next second he was turning a series of cart-wheels backwards and forwards in front of the altar. As a final effort, he stood on his head, raising himself on his palms with his feet straight up in the air. He heard someone call out, and he thought it was an exclamation of surprised admiration at his prowess. He determined that this performance should eclipse all others. He glanced at the sacred figure. Yes! She was looking at him and the smile was still on her face. She was pleased, and it encouraged him to super-human efforts to keep his balance. If only his mother could see—Swish! and a stick descended upon his two upturned bare soles. Swish! quickly came the stick again, wielded by an angry priest, purple with rage at such conduct in the House of God, and of Prayer.

Gio's feet had come hurriedly to the floor at the first blow, but, as he rolled over, the second swish of the stick caught him on the head. Had it not been for his thick crop of curls, it would probably have killed him. With a yell of terror he scrambled to his feet and fled. Half-stunned and well-nigh blinded with this last blow, he rushed wildly from the chapel. His head sang with the pain, and he was quite unconscious of the rumble of wheels and the clop! clop! of the horses' hoofs, and in his agony of fright, he dashed madly into the passing coach laden with passengers. Someone shrieked. The driver shouted and did his best to pull up the horses, but he was too late. In a second all was over. The fore wheel had passed over little Gio's head and a moment later only the brown, lifeless clay remained. Gio's prayer had been answered. Gio's spirit had gone to that land where the dark things of this life will be made clear—and where his mother already awaited him.

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very hour, was found in the isolated office facing the street. It was a cheque-book, quite full of unused cheques.

"This cheque-book," said Hewitt to Inspector Plummer and myself, "was in the drawer below that in which we discovered the Admiralty code. The Eastern Consolidated is the bank, as you see—Upper Holloway branch. Now we must follow this up at once, before waiting to search any further. There may be something more important as a clue, or there may not, but at any rate, while we are looking for it we are losing time. This may bring us to him at once."

"You mean that he may have some address in Holloway," suggested Plummer, "and we may get it from the bank!"

"There's that possibility, and another," Hewitt answered. "He has had to bolt without warning or preparation, with nothing but the clothes he ran in—probably very little money. Money he will want at once, and he would rather not wait till the morning to get it; if he can get it at once it will mean thirteen or fourteen hours' start at least. More, he will know very well that this place will be searched, that this cheque-book will be discovered soon enough, and that consequently the bank will be watched. This is what he will do—what he is doing now, very likely. He will knock up the resident manager of that bank and try to get a cheque cashed to-night. I don't think that can be done; in which case he will probably try to make some arrangement to have money sent him. Either way, we must be at the Upper Holloway branch of the Eastern Consolidated Bank as soon as a hansom can get us there."

Thus it was settled, and Hewitt and Plummer went off at once, leaving Plummer's men, with the City police, in charge of the raided premises; leaving some of them also to make enquiries in the neighbourhood. Mr. Victor Peytral had shown himself anxious to accompany Hewitt and Plummer, but had been dissuaded by Hewitt. I guessed that Hewitt feared that some hasty indiscretion on the part of this terribly-wronged man might endanger his plans. Peytral, however, seemed tractable enough, and left immediately after them; he had business, he said, which would occupy him, he expected, for a day or two, and when it was completed he would see us again.

As for myself, I only remained long enough to ascertain that the police could find no trace of the direction of Mayes's flight in the immediate neighbourhood. They had little to aid them. He had gone without a hat, and his dress was in some degree disordered by his struggle with me; but the latter defect he might easily have remedied in the courts as he ran, and they could gather no tidings of a hatless man. So I took my way to my office,

my wrist growing stiffer and more painful as I went, so that I was not sorry to arrange for another member of the staff to take my duty for the night, and to get to bed a few hours earlier than usual, after the day's fatigue and excitement.

II.

Going to bed uncommonly soon, I woke correspondingly early in the morning; but I was no earlier than Hewitt, who was at my door, in fact, ere my breakfast was well begun.

"Well," I asked eagerly, almost before my friend had entered, "have you got him at last?"

"Not yet," Hewitt answered. "But he did exactly as I had expected. Plummer and I knocked up the bank manager, who lives over the premises at the Upper Holloway branch. He was a very decent fellow—rather young for the post—but he was naturally a bit surprised, possibly irritated, at being bothered by one and another after office hours. I showed him the cheque-book, and asked him if it belonged to any customer of his.

"'Why, yes,' he said, examining the numbers, 'I remember this because it is the first of a new series, and we issued it the day before yesterday to a new customer. Where did you get it?'

"'We are very anxious to see that customer,' I said. 'Has he been here this evening?'

"The manager seemed a trifle surprised, but answered readily enough. 'Yes,' he said, 'he was here not an hour ago.'

"'Wanting to draw money?' I asked. But that the manager wouldn't tell me, of course. So that it was necessary for Plummer to step in and reveal the fact that this was a police matter, and that he was a detective-inspector. That made some difference. The manager told us that our man had opened an account at the bank only two days before; and I'd like you to guess what name he had opened it under?"

"Not Myatt?" I said. "After the chase——"

"No, not Myatt."

"Catherton Hunt?"

"No, nor Catherton Hunt. He had opened it in the name of Mayes!"

"What! his actual name?"

"His actual original name, according to Peytral. The account was transferred, it would seem, from another bank; and I have an idea we shall find that he has been shifting the bulk of his money about from one bank to another as safety suggested, using his real name with it. You remember we could find no trace of a banking account when the police raided and ransacked Calton Lodge after Mason was killed? Quite probably he has had small current accounts in other names at various times to aid in his schemes, but his main account has always stood in his real name; and by that, you see, we get some confirmation of Peytral's story. Well, as I say, the account



influence of the *first* experiment, to suggest to him a certain word or formula, or even a silent sign, which shall bring him under the influence at any other time, whenever the hypnotist chooses to repeat it—just as I explained was done with Mr. Telfer, in the case of the Admiralty code. But the first suggestion would not be a difficult thing—it would only require a little time and persuasion. Nothing would be said about hypnotism, of course; perhaps something about a little physical experiment, or the like, and then in a moment or two the subject would be in this creature's power for ever. Remember the little 'ceremony of initiation' that the scoundrel attempted to persuade you to submit to! That meant hypnotism—perhaps death.

"But this is mere speculation. Mayes found that the keys on the premises were not enough to release his money even if the strict rules of the bank had permitted the cashing of a cheque out of hours. But the manager suggested that perhaps some neighbouring tradesman would exchange cash for a cheque, and, with the view of obliging the new customer, the manager went with him as far as the shop of Mr. Isaac Trenaman, a grocer and cheesemonger with a rather large shop at the corner of the road. Mr. Trenaman, introduced and assured by the manager, was willing to give as much cash as he could find in the till against Mr. Mayes's cheque, and did so to the extent of twenty-seven pounds, a cheque for which sum was duly drawn on one of the tradesman's own cheque forms, and left with him. This done, the bank's new customer took himself off, with thanks and apologies; carrying with him, however, two blank cheque forms from Mr. Trenaman's book, the pennies for which he punctiliously paid over the counter. Having no cheque forms with him, he explained, he might find them useful if he could come across some friend who could provide the cash he wished to use that night. And having completed this business so far, this charming new customer of the bank made off into the night."

"And is that all you know of his movements?"

"Yes, as yet. He seems to have made no very definite excuse to the manager for wanting the money in such a hurry—just said something had occurred which made cash necessary, and was very polite and apologetic, generally. The manager formed a notion that it must be for some gambling purpose—he fancied that Mayes said something distantly alluding to that, but wasn't sure."

"Did you ask about the address given to the bank?"

"Of course; but there we gained nothing. The manager couldn't remember it exactly, and the books, of course, were locked up. But we know it already—for what the manager *could* remember was that it was an office address, and

somewhere near Barbican! So that we are back at the Barbican den again, where I am going now, with Plummer, to give a day to a minute investigation of the whole place. Meanwhile a watch is being set at the bank in Holloway."

"Do you expect him back there, then?"

"Hardly. You see he knows that by this time we must have found his cheque-book and will be on the watch. But there is just a chance—a very remote one—that he may send a message; perhaps send somebody to cash a cheque. Though I don't expect it, for he is no fool—he is, indeed, a sort of genius—and that would be a mistake, I think. Still, he is bold, and that is where his money is, and he may make a dash at it. So a couple of Plummer's men are to be waiting there, this morning, in the manager's office, and if anybody comes from Mayes he will be detained. Perhaps you would like to be with them? You can't be of much use with me, and the job will be dull. But there you *may* have a chance of excitement, and you will be useful to come and report if anything does happen. Why, you may even bag Mayes himself!"

"Of course—anywhere you please. They told you last night, I suppose, that Peytral had business, and had gone off?"

"Yes, and I'm not sorry. He is too dangerous a man to have about us, with his hot blood and the terrible injuries he cherishes the memory of. As likely as not, if we got Mayes, we should next have to collar Peytral for shooting him, or something. So I'm not sorry he is out of it for a bit. But can you start now? Plummer is in my office and the two men are in a cab outside. The bank opens at nine, and that is in Upper Holloway."

I seized my hat and made ready.

"You should keep your eyes open," Hewitt hinted, "before you get to the bank and when you leave, as well as while you're there. Do you remember how poor Mason was watched? Well, there is probably some watching going on now. Last night, on our way to the bank and back, I believe that Plummer and I were watched pretty closely."

III.

Plummer's two plain-clothes men and I reached the neighbourhood of the bank with a quarter-of-an-hour to spare, or rather more. We dismissed the cab at some little distance from the bank, and approached it singly, so that it was not difficult for us to slip in separately among the dozen or fifteen clerks as they arrived. We passed directly into the manager's room, the door of which opened into the space left for the public before the counter. From this room the whole of the outer office was visible through the glass of the partition. The manager, Mr. Blockley, a quick, intelligent



toward him. "Ah, just so; a hundred pounds—Mayes. We must just trouble you to come with us, if you please. There is some explanation wanted about that cheque."

I had followed the two men from the manager's room, and now I saw that while one had laid his hand on the stranger's shoulder the other had taken him by the opposite arm. "Why," said the former, looking into his face, "it's 'Broady' Sims!"

"All right," the man growled resignedly. "It's a cop. I'll go quiet."

But as he spoke I saw the free hand steal out behind him and pitch away a crumpled fragment of paper. One of the policemen saw it, too, followed it with his eyes, and saw me snatch it up.

"That's right, sir," he said, "take care of that; and we'll have a cab, in case anything else drops accidentally. It's just a turning over, 'Broady,' that's what it is."

I spread out the piece of paper, and was astonished to find inscribed on it just such another series of figures, in groups of eight, as was found in the cipher message in the Case of the Lever Key.

Here was a great find—a secret message as clear to me as to Mayes himself, and as likely as not the scrap of paper that would hang him! I took one of the plain-clothes men aside while the other kept his hold of "Broady" Sims.

"This is very important," I said. "It is a cipher message which Mr. Hewitt can read—or I, myself, in fact, with a little time. Must you take it yourselves? If so, I'll make a copy now."

"Well, sir, we're responsible, you see," the man said, "so I think we must take it; perhaps you'd better make a copy, as you suggest."

"Very well," I said, "that is done in a few seconds. You can take your man off, and I will go direct to Mr. Hewitt and Inspector Plummer with the copy." And with that I made the copy, which read thus:—

23, 19, 15, 1, 9, 14, 9, 2; 20, 8, 1, 20, 14, 14, 20, 8; 14, 5, 12, 4, 9, 7, 5, 14; 3, 8, 18, 23, 0, 14, 1, 8; 22, 9, 6, 1, 18, 3, 5, 1; 19, 14, 15, 21, 9, 0, 20, 12; 18, 12, 21, 1, 6, 23, 20, 12; 9, 18, 15, 5, 18, 13, 12, 20.

It struck me to ask the manager if the cheque just presented were one of those procured from Mr. Trenaman the night before, and I found that it was. Then I left the policemen with their prisoner and made for the nearest cab-rank. This cipher message, no doubt conveying Mayes's instructions to the man just captured, was probably of the utmost importance, and Hewitt must see it at once; and as the cab ambled along towards Barbican I busied myself in deciphering the figures,

according to the plan of the knight's move in chess, which Hewitt had already explained to me.* I could only see two noughts among the numbers, so plainly it was a longer message than the one then deciphered—one of sixty-two letters, in fact. I turned the figures into the letters corresponding in the alphabet, a for 1, b for 2, and so on, as Hewitt had done, and I arranged these letters in the squares of a roughly-drawn chess-board, so that they stood thus:—

w	s	o	a	i	n	i	b
t	h	a	t	n	n	t	h
n	e	l	d	i	g	e	n
c	h	r	w	o	n	a	h
v	i	f	a	r	c	e	a
s	n	o	u	i	o	t	l
r	l	u	a	f	w	t	l
i	r	o	e	r	m	l	t

The letters thus set out, to read off the message was a simple task enough, in view of the key Hewitt had given me. I began, as in the case of the Lever Key message, at the right-hand top corner, and taking the knight's move from *b* to *e* in the last square but one of the third line, thence to *a* at the end of the fifth line, and so to *t* in the seventh line, and from that to *r* (fifth square in bottom line), *u* in seventh line and so on, in the order shown by the Lever Key message (a copy of which I kept as a curiosity in my pocket-book), I read the message through and set it down thus:—

*Be at ruin Channel Marsh to-night twelve;
wait in hall for instruc. Word final.*

The general meaning of this seemed clear enough. The man whom the policeman had recognised as "Broady" Sims was to be at some spot—a ruined building, it would seem—in a place called Channel Marsh, at midnight, there to wait in the hall for instructions; no doubt for instructions where to take the hundred pounds he was to have got from the bank. "Word final" was not so clear, though I judged—and I think rightly—that it meant that the word "final" was to be used as a pass-word by which the two messengers should know each other.

I was almost at my destination, and was cogitating the message and its meaning, when the cab checked at some traffic in Barbican,

* See *The Case of the Lever Key*, LONDON MAGAZINE, January, 1903.

just by "The Compasses" public-house, and Mr. Victor Peytral hailed me and climbed on the step of the cab.

"I was just going to see if Mr. Hewitt was at the place," he said, "and if so to ask him for news. But I am rather in a hurry, and perhaps you can tell me?"

"We are on the track, I think," I answered, "and I have just come across this, which I am taking to Hewitt," and with that I showed him my translation of the cipher, and gave him its history in half-a-dozen sentences.

"That's good," Peytral answered. "I don't know Channel Marsh, do you? But probably Mr. Hewitt does. I won't keep you any longer—I see you're hurrying. But I hope to see you again before long."

He dropped off the step and disappeared, and the cab went on round the corner by "The Compasses."

I found Hewitt and Plummer in the office where, on pretence of bookbinding, I had first seen Mayes face to face the day before. They were near the completion of their examination of this office and all its contents, and soon would begin as systematically on the premises behind. I gave Hewitt my copy of the cipher message, and my translation, with an exact account of how it had come into my possession.

Martin Hewitt studied the message for a minute or two, and then relapsed into grave thought. So he sat for some little time, while Plummer left the room by the window and descended the ladder to speak with his men on guard below.

Presently Hewitt looked up and said: "Brett, this message is most important—probably as important as you suppose it to be. But at the same time I believe you have made a great mistake about it."

"But I haven't misread it, have I? Is there any other way——?"

"No, you haven't misread it; you've read every word, I believe, as it was intended to be read. But it is a very different thing from what you suppose it to be."

"What is it, then?"

Martin Hewitt put the paper on the table and looked keenly in my face. "It is a trap," he said. "It is a trap to catch *me*—unless I flatter myself unduly."

I could not understand. "A trap?" I repeated. "But how?"

"Why should Mayes need to send his confederate instructions by written note? We know the nature of his hold over his subordinates, and we know that it means personal communication. Also, the cheque was in Mayes's own hands last night. More, Mayes knows very well that I have read that cipher—has known it for some time; otherwise how could we have discovered the bonds in the case of the Lever Key? Also, Mayes knows that we have his cheque-book

and know his bank. Didn't I assure you we were watched last night? I believe he knows all we have done. In such circumstances he might risk his jackal's liberty by sending him on the desperate chance of cashing a cheque, but, knowing the risk, he would never have let him come with information on him. And, last of all, would he have let him come carrying a vital secret written in that very cipher which he knows I read many weeks ago. And then see how that message, instead of being concealed, was positively brought to your notice! That man 'Broady' Sims is a cunning rascal, and the police know him of old as a skilful swindler and bill-forgery. A man like that doesn't get rid of a compromising scrap of paper by trundling it out under your nose just at the moment he is arrested, when the attention of everybody is directed to him; no, he would wait his opportunity, and then he would probably slip it into his mouth and swallow it. As it is, he would seem to have succeeded in dropping this paper full in your sight, with an elaborate pretence of secrecy. Now this is what has been done, Brett. That man has been sent to cash a cheque, with very little hope of success, or none, because the first move that Mayes would anticipate on our part would be the watching for him and his cheques at the bank in Upper Holloway. If by any chance the cheque had been cashed, well and good, no harm would have been done, and then Mayes could have gone on to arrange for drawing out the rest of his balance. But if, on the other hand, as he fully anticipated, Sims was arrested, what then? Nothing was lost but a penny cheque, and even Sims—though Mayes would care nothing about that—could only be searched and then released, for the cheque was perfectly genuine, and there was no charge against him. But since he would certainly be searched, that cipher note was given him, with instructions to make a conspicuous show of attempting to get rid of it. Now that note was written in a cipher which Mayes knew was as plain as print—to whom? To *me*. I am on his trail, and this note is deliberately flung in my way, open as the day, but with every appearance of secrecy. I am his dangerous enemy, and he knows it—as he told you, in fact, yesterday. If he can clear me away, he can take breath and make himself safe. The purpose of this note is to induce me to go, alone, to this place on Channel Marsh to-night at twelve, in the hope of learning where to find Mayes. There I am to be got rid of—murdered in some way, for which preparation will be made. Mayes judges my character pretty well. He knows that, in such circumstances as he represents, Sims being kept away from his appointment, I should certainly go and take his place, and use his pass-word, to learn what I could. And, Brett, *that is precisely what I shall do!*"

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pulled out of his pocket an old peaked cap with ear-pieces tied over the top.

"You mustn't bring your best clothes," he went on, "or you'll spoil them scrambling about boats and groping in ditches. I have done my ditch-groping for the day, and I'm going to change. You had best be putting on older things while I get into newer."

"What sort of place is this Channel Marsh?" I asked.

"Well, I should think there must be a great many better places to spend a night in. It must be the dreariest, wettest flat within miles of London, and I should like to see the portrait of the man who had the idea of building a house there. For a house there is, or rather the ruins of it—deserted for years, and half carried away by rats and people who wanted slates and firewood, and water pipes."

"Is that the place where you intend waiting to-night?"

"It is. I haven't examined it nearly so closely as I should like, for fear of raising a scare. Channel Marsh is almost an island, with a narrow neck of an entrance at each end. A foot-track runs the whole length, and a person in the ruined house can easily see anybody entering the marsh from either end. For that reason I reconnoitred from a boat—the boat you will go in to-night. I think it is the very dirtiest old tub I ever saw, so that it suited my rig out. I discovered it at a wharf some little way down the river, and I paid a shilling for the hire of it. Channel Marsh is banked a bit on one side, and I crept up under cover of the bank. I learned very little, beyond the general lie of the land, because I was so mighty cautious. I judged it better to be content with half an examination, rather than drive away the game. And even as it is I've an idea I have been seen. I lay up among some reeds till dark, but after that I am *sure* there was somebody on the marsh—and skulking, too, like me. So after waiting and scouting for a little I gave it up and paddled quietly back."

"But look here, Hewitt," I said, "this seems a bit mad. Why go and risk yourself as you talk of doing? You believe Mayes will be there, at the ruin, or will come there at twelve. Very well, then, why can't the police send enough men to surround the place and capture him for certain?"

Hewitt smiled and shook his head. "My dear Brett," he said, "you haven't seen the place, and I have. It will be hard enough job for you and Plummer to get near the spot unobserved, guided by a man who knows every inch. A trampling crowd of policemen would have as much chance as a herd of elephants, and on such light nights as we are having now they would be seen a mile off. And who knows what scouts he may have out? No, as I say, it

will be a great piece of luck if you get through unobserved as it is, and even now I'm not perfectly certain that I couldn't do best alone. However, arrangements are made now, and you are coming, three of you."

"Then what are the arrangements?" I asked.

"Just these. You are to leave here first. Make the best of your way to Mile End Gate, where an old inn stands in the middle of the road. Go to the corner of the turning opposite this, at the south side of the road. At eleven o'clock a four-wheeler will drive up, with Plummer and one of his men in it. The man is one who knows all the geography of Channel Marsh, and he also knows exactly where to find the boat I used to-day. You will drive to a little way beyond Bow Bridge, and then Plummer's man will lead you to the boat. You had better scull and leave the others to look out. They will know what to do then. You will pull along to a place where you can watch till you see me coming on to the Marsh by the path. As soon as you see me you will slip quietly along to a place the policeman will show you, close to the ruin, and watch again. That's all. I don't know whether or not you think it worth while to take a pistol. I certainly shall; but then, I'm most likely to want it. Plummer will have one."

I thought it well worth while, and I took my regulation "Webley"—a relic of my old Volunteer captaincy. Then, by way of the underground railway, I gained the neighbourhood of Mile End, and interested myself about its back streets till the time approached to look for Plummer's cab.

Plummer was more than punctual—indeed, he was two or three minutes before his time. The cab drew near the curb and scarcely stopped, so quickly did I scramble in.

"Good," said Plummer, "we're well ahead of time. Mr. Hewitt quite right?"

"Yes," I said. "I left him so an hour and a half ago at his office." And we sat silent while the cab rattled and rumbled over the stony road to Bow Bridge, and the shopkeepers on the way put up their shutters and extinguished their lights.

Bow Bridge was reached and passed, and presently we stopped the cab and alighted. Here Styles, Plummer's man, took the lead, and a little way farther along the road we turned into a dark and muddy lane on the left. We floundered through this for some hundred-and-fifty yards or so, and then suddenly drew in at an opening on the right. Here we stood for a few moments while our guide groped his way down towards the muddy water we could smell, rather than see, a little way before us.

There were a few broken steps, and a broad black thing which was the boat. We got into

it as silently as we could manage, and cast off. It was a clumsy, broad-beamed, leaky old conveyance, and that it was as dirty as Hewitt had described I could feel as I groped for the sculls and got them out. The night was light and dark by turns—changing with the clouds. We shipped the rudder, and Styles steered, or I should probably have run ashore more than once, for the banks were not always distinct, and the channel was narrow and dark. We passed the black forms of several factories with tall chimneys, and then drew out among the marshes, flat and grey, with wisps of mist lying here and there. So we went in silence for a while, till at last we drew in against the bank on the left and laid hold by a post at a landing-place.

"This is the Channel Marsh," whispered Styles, as we climbed cautiously ashore. "We can't see the house very well from here, but there's where Mr. Hewitt will come through."

Looking over the top of the low bank, we could discern a path which traversed the length of the marsh, entering it by a broken gate at a neck of land which we must have passed on our way. Here we crouched and waited. We had heard the half-hour struck on some distant clock soon after entering the boat, and now we waited anxiously for the three-quarters. So long did the time seem to my excited perceptions that I had quite decided that the clock must have stopped, or at any rate did not chime quarters, when at last the strokes came, distant and plaintive, over the misty flats.

"A quarter of an hour," Plummer remarked. "He won't be a minute late, nor a minute too early, from what I know of him. How long will it take him from that gate to the ruin?"

"Eight or nine minutes, good," Styles answered.

"Then we shall see him in seven minutes or six minutes, as the case may be," Plummer rejoined in the same low tones.

Slowly the minutes dragged, with not a sound about us save the sucking and lapping of the muddy river and the occasional flop of a water rat. The dark clouds were now fewer and the moon was high and only partially obscured by the thinner clouds that traversed its face. More than once I fancied a sound from the direction of the ruin and then doubted my fancy; when at last there was a sound indeed, but from the opposite direction, and in a moment we saw Hewitt, muffled close about the neck, walking briskly up the path.

We regained the boat with all possible speed and silence and I pulled my best. During our watch I had had time to perceive the wisdom of the arrangements which had been made. We had been watching from a place fairly out of sight from the ruin, yet sufficiently near it to be able to reach its neighbourhood before Hewitt; and certainly it was better to approach

the actual spot at the same time as Hewitt himself, for then, if he were being watched for, the attention of the watcher would be diverted from us.

Presently we reached the reed-bed that Hewitt had spoken of, and I could see a sort of little creek or inlet. Here I ceased to pull, and Styles cautiously punted us into the creek with one of the sculls. The boat grounded noiselessly in the mud, and we crept ashore one at a time through mud and sedge.

The creek was edged with a bank of rough, broken ground, grown with coarse grass and bramble, and as we peeped over this bank the ruined house stood before us—so near as to startle me by its proximity. It must have been a large house originally—if, indeed, it was ever completed. Now it stood roofless, dismantled and windowless, and in many places whole rods of brickwork had fallen and now littered the ground about. The black gap of the front door stood plain to see, with a short flight of broken steps before it, and by the side of these a thick timber shore supported the front wall. It struck me then that the ruin was largely due to a failure of the marshy foundation.

The place seemed silent and empty. Hewitt's footsteps were now plain to hear, and presently he appeared, walking briskly as before. Hewitt could not see us, and did not look for us, but made directly for the broken steps. He mounted these, paused on the topmost and struck a match. It seemed a rather large hall, and I caught a momentary glimpse of bare rafters and plasterless wall. Then the match went out and Hewitt stepped within.

Almost on the instant there came a loud jar, a noise of falling bricks, and then, in the same instant of time I heard a terrific crash and saw Hewitt leap out at the front door—leap out, as it seemed from a cloud of dust and splinters.

I sprang to my feet, but Plummer pulled me down again. "Steady!" he said, "lie low! He isn't hurt. Wait and see before we show ourselves."

It seemed that the floor above had fallen on the spot where Hewitt had been standing. He had alighted from his leap on hands and knees, but now stood facing the house, revolver in hand, watching.

There was a moment's pause, a sound of movement from the upper part of the ruin, another quiet moment, and then a bang and a flash from high on the wall to the right. Hewitt sprang to shelter behind the heavy shore, and another shot followed him, scoring a white line across the thick timber.

Plummer was up, and Styles and I were after him. "There he is!" cried Plummer, "up on the coping!" I pulled out my own pistol.

"Don't shoot!" cried Hewitt. "We'll take him alive!"



Far to the right, on the topmost coping of the front wall I could see a crouching figure. I saw it rise to its knees, and once more raise an arm to take aim at Hewitt; and then, with a sudden cry, another human figure appeared from behind the coping and sprang upon the first. There was a moment of struggle and then the rotten coping crumbled, and down, down, came bricks and men together.

I sickened. I can only explain my feeling by saying that never before had I seen anything that seemed so long in falling as those two men. And then with a horrid crash they struck the broken ground, and the pistol fired again with the shock.

We reached them in a dozen strides, and turned them over, limp, oozing and lifeless. And then we saw that one was Mayes, and the other—Victor Peytral!

We kept no silence now, but Plummer blew his whistle loud and long, and I fired my revolver into the air, chamber after chamber. Styles started off at a run along the path towards the town lights, to fetch what aid he might.

But even then we had doubt if any aid would avail Mayes. He was the under man in the fall, and he had dropped across a little heap of bricks. He now lay unconscious, breathing heavily, with a terrible wound at the back of the head, and Hewitt foretold, and rightly—that when the doctor did come he would find a broken spine. Peytral, on the other hand, though unconscious, showed no sign of injury, and just before the doctor came, sighed heavily and turned on his side.

First there came policemen, and then in a little time a hastily-dressed surgeon, and after him an ambulance. Mayes was carried off to hospital, but, with a good deal of rubbing and a little brandy, Peytral came round well enough to be helped over the marshes to a cab.

The trap which had been laid for Hewitt was simple, but terribly effective. The floor above the hall—loose and broken everywhere—was supported on rafters, and the rafters were crossed underneath and supported by a stout beam. The rafters had been sawn through at both ends, and the rotten floor had been piled high with broken brick and stone to a weight of a ton or more. The end of a loose beam had been wedged obliquely under the end of the one timber now supporting the whole weight, so that a push on the opposite end of this long lever would force away the bricks on which the beam rested and let the whole weight fall. It was the jar of the beam and the fall of the first few loose bricks that had so far warned Hewitt as to enable him to leap from under the floor almost as it fell.

Peytral's sudden appearance gave us a suspicion as to the espionage to which Hewitt

had been subjected—a suspicion confirmed later by Peytral himself after his recovery from the shock of the fall. For fresh news of his enemy had re-awakened all his passion, and since he alone could not find him, he was willing enough to let Hewitt do the tracking down, if only he himself might clutch Mayes's throat in the end. This explained the "business" that had called him away after the Barbican stronghold had been captured; finding both Hewitt and Plummer somewhat uncommunicative and himself somewhat "out of it" he had drawn off, and had followed Hewitt's every movement, confident that he would be led to his old enemy at last. What I had told him of the cipher message had led him to hunt out Channel Marsh in the afternoon, and to return at midnight. He, of course, regarded the message, as I did myself at the time, as a perfectly genuine instruction from Mayes to Sims, and he came to the rendezvous wholly in ignorance as to what Hewitt was doing, and with no better hope than that he might hear something that would lead him in the direction of Mayes. He had entered the marsh after dark from the upper end, and had lain concealed by the other channel till near midnight; then he had crept to the rear of the ruin and climbed to where an opening seemed to offer a good chance of hearing what might pass in the hall. He had heard Hewitt approach from the front, and the crash that followed. The rest we had seen.

V.

Mayes never recovered consciousness, and was dead when we visited the hospital the day after; both skull and spine were badly fractured. And the very last we saw of the Red Triangle was the implement with which it had been impressed, which was found in his pocket.

It was a small triangular prism of what I believe is called soap-stone. It was perhaps four inches long, and the face at the end corresponded with the mark that Hewitt had seen on the forehead of Mr. Jacob Mason. It fitted closely in a leather case, in the end of which was a small, square metal box full of the red, greasy pigment with which the mark had been impressed.

It was from "Broady" Sims that we learnt the exact use and meaning of this implement; though he would not say a word till he had seen with his own eyes Mayes lying dead in the mortuary. Then he gasped his relief and said, "That's the end of something worse than slavery for me! I'll turn straight after this."

Sims's story was long, and it went over ground that concerns none of Hewitt's adventures. But what we learned from it was briefly this. It had been Mayes's way to meet clever criminals as they left gaol after a term of imprisonment. In this manner he had met

Sims. He had made great promises, had spoken of great ideas which they could put into execution together, had lent him money, and then at last had "initiated" him, as he called it. He had made him lie back in a chair and had directed his gaze on the Red Triangle held in the air before him; and then the Triangle had descended gently and he felt sleepy, till at the cold touch of the thing on his forehead his senses had gone. This was done more than once, and in the end the victim found that Mayes had only to raise the Triangle before him to send him to sleep instantly. Then he found that he must do certain things, whether he wanted to or not. And it ended in complete subservience; so that Mayes could set him to perpetrate a robbery and then appropriate the proceeds for himself, for by post-hypnotic suggestion he could force him to bring and hand over every penny. More, the poor wretch was held in constant terror, for he knew that his very life depended on the lift of his master's hand. He could be sent into lethargy by a gesture and killed in that state. That very thing was done, in fact, as we have seen, in two cases.

Sims was but one of a gang of such criminals brought to heel and made victims. Their minds and souls, such as they were, had passed into the miscreant's keeping, and terror reinforced the power of hypnotism. They committed crimes, and when they failed they took the punishment; when they succeeded Mayes took the gains, or at any rate, the greater part of them. He went, also, among people who were not yet criminals, and by degrees made them so, to his own profit. The case of Henning, the correspondence clerk, was one that had come under Hewitt's eyes. He used his faculty also with great cunning in other ways—as we had seen in the matter of the Admiralty code. And it was even said among the gang that a man he had once hypnotised he could force by suggestion to commit suicide when he became useless or inconvenient.

All that had remained mysterious in the earlier cases now became clear. In the first, the case of Samuel's diamonds, Denson had been put into the office where Samuel had found him, by Mayes, with the express design of effecting a diamond robbery. The robbery was effected, and the unhappy Denson formed a plan of making a bolt of it himself with the diamonds. He was, perhaps, what is called a difficult subject in hypnotism—amenable enough to direct influence, but not sufficiently retentive of post-hypnotic suggestion. He hid the jewels and adopted a disguise, but Mayes was watching him better than he supposed. The diamonds were lost, but Denson was found and done to death—probably not in that retreat

near Barbican, but at night in the open street. The diamonds were not found on him, and the body, with the mark of the Triangle still on it, was taken by night to a central spot in London and there left. Mayes probably thought that a notable example like this, so boldly displayed and so conspicuously reported in the Press, would impress his auxiliaries throughout London with the terror that was one of his weapons; for they would well understand the meaning of the Red Triangle, and they would receive a striking illustration of the consequences of rebellion or bad faith. The money and the watch were left in the pockets because they were trifles after the loss of fifteen-thousand pounds' worth of diamonds, and their presence in the pockets made the murder the less easy to understand—which was a point gained. And as to the keys—Mayes knew nothing of where the diamonds were hidden, and so had no use for them. The immediate result of this affair on the only honest member of Mayes's circle I have told in the case of Mr. Jacob Mason. He was not yet thoroughly in Mayes's hands, but he had "dabbled," as he remorsefully confessed, and Mayes had already found him useful. He was dangerous, and his end came quickly. Another victim who had probably begun innocently enough was Henning, the clerk to Kingsley, Bell and Dalton, and his death in the Penn's meadow barn leaves a mystery that never can be cleared up. Was it murder or was it suicide by post-hypnotic suggestion? It will be remembered that the fire burst out in the barn after Mayes had left it.

The case of Mr. Telfer was explained clearly enough by Hewitt at the time; but it is an example of the snares that lie open for the most innocent person who allows himself to be made the subject of hypnotic experiments at the hands of persons with whom, and with whose objects, he is not thoroughly acquainted.

As to what would have happened if Plummer and I had yielded to Mayes's threats so far as to undergo the "initiation" he proposed, at the time we were helpless in his hands—of that I have little doubt. I cannot suppose that he would have wasted much time over me, once I had fallen lethargic. When Hewitt burst in he would have found me lying dead, with the Red Triangle on my forehead. It would have saved Mayes a lot of noise and struggle, at least.

But I often wonder whether or not there was anything in his reference to the place beyond the sea, where he would make me a great man if I did as he wished. Was it his design, having accumulated sufficient wealth, to return and take his natural place among the enlightened rulers of Hayti? He would not have been so much worse than some of the others.

THE END.

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A MERE INTERLUDE.*

A COMPLETE STORY.

By THOMAS HARDY.

Author of "Far from the Madding Crowd," "Tess, of the D'Urbervilles," "Under the Greenwood Tree,"
"Trumpet Major," "Two on a Tower," &c., &c.

I.

IT was often said, and oftener surmised, that Baptista Trewthen was a young woman with scarcely any emotions or character. There was nothing in her to love, and nothing to hate—so ran the general opinion. That she showed few positive qualities was true. The colours and tones which changing events paint on the faces of active womankind were looked for in vain upon hers. But still waters may run deep; and no crisis had come in the years of her early maidenhood to demonstrate what lay hidden within her, like metal in a mine.

She was the daughter of a small farmer in St. Mary's, one of the Scilly Isles, who had spent a large sum, as it was there understood, on her education, by sending her to the mainland for two years. At nineteen she was entered at the Training College for Elementary Teachers, and at twenty-one nominated to a school in the country, near Exeter, whither she proceeded after the Christmas examination and holidays.

The months passed by from winter to spring and summer, and Baptista applied herself to her new duties as best she could, till an uneventful year had elapsed. Then an air of abstraction pervaded her bearing as she walked to and fro, twice a day, and she showed the traits of a person who had something on her mind. A widow, by name Mrs. Wace, in whose house Baptista Trewthen had been provided with a sitting-room and bedroom till the school-house should be built, noticed this change in her youthful tenant's manner, and at last ventured to press her with a few questions.

"It has nothing to do with the place nor with you," said Miss Trewthen.

"Then it is the salary?"

"No, nor the salary."

"Then it is something you have heard from home, my dear."

Baptista was silent for a few moments. "It is Mr. Heddegan," she murmured. "Him they used to call David Heddegan before he got his money."

"And who is the Mr. Heddegan they used to call David?"

"An old bachelor at Hugh Town, St. Mary's, with no relations whatever, who lives about a stone's throw from father. When I was a child he used to take me on his knee and say he'd marry me some day. Now I am a woman the jest has turned to earnest, and he is anxious to do it. And father and mother say I can't do better than have him."

"He's well off?"

"Yes—he's the richest man we know—as a friend and neighbour."

"How much older did you say he was than yourself?"

"I didn't say. Twenty years at least."

"And an unpleasant man into the bargain, perhaps?"

"No—he's not unpleasant."

"Well, child, all I can say is that I'd resist any such engagement if it's not palatable to ye. You are comfortable here, in my little house, I hope. All the parish like ye: and I've never been so cheerful since my poor husband left me to wear his wings as I've been with ye as my lodger."

The schoolmistress assured her landlady that she could return the sentiment. "But here comes my perplexity," she said. "I don't like keeping school. Ah! you are surprised—you didn't suspect it. That's because I've concealed my feeling. Well, I simply hate school. I don't care for children—they are unpleasant, troublesome little things, whom nothing would delight so much as to hear that you had fallen down dead. Yet I would even put up with them if it were not for the inspector. For three months before his visit I didn't sleep soundly. And the Committee of Council are always changing the Code, so that you don't know what to teach and what to leave untaught. I think father and mother are right. They say I shall never excel as a schoolmistress if I dislike the work so, and that, therefore, I ought to get settled by marrying Mr. Heddegan. Between us two, I like him better than school; but I don't like him quite so much as to wish to marry him."

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These conversations, once began, were continued from day to day, till at length the young girl's elderly friend and landlady threw in her opinion on the side of Miss Trewthen's parents. All things considered, she declared, the uncertainty of the school, the labour, Baptista's natural dislike for teaching, it would be as well to take what fate offered, and make the best of matters by wedding her father's old neighbour and prosperous friend.

The Easter holidays came round, and Baptista went to spend them, as usual, in her native isle, going by train as far as she could and crossing by packet from Penzance. When she returned in the middle of April her face wore a more settled aspect.

"Well?" said the expectant Mrs. Wace.

"I have agreed to have him as my husband," said Baptista, in an off-hand way. "Heaven knows if it will be for the best or not. But I have agreed to it, and so the matter is settled."

Mrs. Wace commended her; but Baptista did not care to dwell on the subject, so that allusion to it was very infrequent between them. Nevertheless, among other things, she repeated to the widow from time to time in monosyllabic remarks that the wedding was really impending; that it was arranged for the summer, and that she had given notice of leaving the school at the August holidays. Later on she announced more specifically that her marriage was to take place immediately after her return home at the beginning of the month aforesaid.

She now corresponded regularly with Mr. Heddegan. Her letters from him were seen, at least from the outside, and in part within, by Mrs. Wace. Had she read more of their interiors than the occasional sentences shown her by Baptista she would have perceived that the scratchy, rusty handwriting of Miss Trewthen's betrothed conveyed little more matter than details of their future house-keeping, and his preparations for the same, with innumerable "my dears" sprinkled in disconnectedly, to show the depth of his affection without the inconveniences of syntax.

II.

It was the end of July—dry, too dry, even for the season—the delicate green herbs and vegetables that grew in this favoured end of the kingdom, tasting rather of the watering-pot than of the pure, fresh moisture from the skies. Baptista's boxes were packed, and one Saturday morning she departed by a waggonette to the station, and thence by train to Penzance, from which port she was, as usual, to cross the water immediately to her home, and become Mr. Heddegan's wife on the Wednesday of the week following.

She might have returned a week sooner. But though the wedding-day had loomed so

near, and the banns were out, she delayed her departure till this last moment, saying it was not necessary for her to be at home long beforehand. As Mr. Heddegan was older than herself, she said, she was to be married in her ordinary summer bonnet and grey silk frock, and there were no preparations to make that had not been amply made by her parents and intended husband.

In due time, after a hot and tedious journey, she reached Penzance. She here obtained some refreshment, and then went towards the pier, where she learnt to her surprise that the little steamboat plying between the town and the islands had left at eleven o'clock, the usual hour of departure in the afternoon having been forestalled in consequence of the fogs which had for a few days prevailed towards evening, making twilight navigation dangerous.

This being Saturday, there was now no other boat till Tuesday, and it became obvious that here she would have to remain for the three days, unless her friends should think fit to rig out one of the island sailing-boats and come to fetch her—a not very likely contingency, the sea distance being nearly forty miles.

Baptista, however, had been detained in Penzance on more than one occasion before, either on account of bad weather or some such reason as the present, and she was, therefore, not in any personal alarm. But, as she was to be married on the following Wednesday, the delay was certainly inconvenient to a more than ordinary degree, since it would leave less than a day's interval between her arrival and the wedding ceremony.

Apart from this awkwardness she did not much mind the accident. It was, indeed, curious to see how little she minded. Perhaps it would not be too much to say that, although she was going to do the critical deed of her life quite willingly, she experienced an indefinable relief at the postponement of her meeting with Heddegan. But her manner after making discovery of the hindrance was quiet and subdued, even to passivity itself; as was instanced by her having, at the moment of receiving information that the steamer had sailed, replied "Oh," so coolly to the porter with her luggage that he was almost disappointed at her lack of disappointment.

The question now was, should she return again to Mrs. Wace, in the Devonshire village, or wait in the town at which she had arrived. She would have preferred to go back, but the distance was too great; moreover, having left the place for good, and somewhat dramatically, to become a bride, a return, even for so short a space, would have been a trifle humiliating.

Leaving, then, her boxes at the station, her next anxiety was to secure a respectable, or rather genteel, lodging in the popular seaside resort confronting her. To this end she looked



about the town, in which, though she had passed through it half-a-dozen times, she was practically a stranger.

Baptista found a room to suit her over a fruiterer's shop, where she made herself at home, and set herself in order after her journey. An early cup of tea having revived her spirits, she walked out to reconnoitre.

Being a schoolmistress, she avoided looking at the schools, and having a sort of trade connection with books, she avoided looking at the booksellers; but, wearying of the other shops, she inspected the churches, not that for her own part she cared much about ecclesiastical edifices; but tourists looked at them, and so would she—a proceeding for which no one would have credited her with any great originality, such, for instance, as that she subsequently showed herself to possess. The churches soon oppressed her; St. Mary's was neither old nor new, St. Paul's was quite new; and she could find no others.

Yet the town and the walks in this land of strawberries, these headquarters of early English flowers and fruit, were then, as always, attractive. From the more picturesque walks she went to Barbican Street, and the Pier, and the Harbour, and looked at the men at work there, loading and unloading, as in the time of the Phœnicians.

"Not Baptista? Yes, Baptista it is!"

The words were uttered behind her. Turning round, she gave a start and became confused, even agitated, for a moment. Then she said in her usual undemonstrative manner, "Oh—is it really you, Charles?"

Without speaking again at once, and with a half-smile, the new-comer glanced her over. There was much criticism, and some resentment—even temper—in his eye.

"I am going home," continued she. "But I have missed the boat."

He scarcely seemed to take in the meaning of this explanation, in the intensity of his critical survey. "Teaching still—what a fine schoolmistress you make, Baptista, I warrant!" he said, with a fine flavour of sarcasm, which was not lost upon her.

"I know I am nothing to brag of," she replied. "That's why I have given up."

"Oh—given up? You astonish me."

"I hate the profession."

"Perhaps that's because I'm in it."

"Oh, no, it isn't. But I'm going to enter on another life altogether. I am going to be married next week to Mr. David Heddegan."

The young man—fortified as he was by a natural cynical pride and passionateness—winced at this unexpected reply, notwithstanding.

"Who is Mr. David Heddegan?" he asked, as indifferently as lay in his power.

She informed him that the bearer of the name was a general merchant of Hugh Town,

St. Mary's—her father's nearest neighbour and oldest friend.

"Then we shan't see anything more of you on the mainland?" inquired the schoolmaster.

"Oh, I don't know about that," said Miss Trewthen.

"Here endeth the career of the belle of the boarding-school your father was foolish enough to send you to. A 'general merchant's' wife in Scilly. Will you sell pounds of soap and pennyworths of tin-tacks, or whole bars of saponaceous matter and great tenpenny nails?"

"He's not in such a small way as that?" she almost pleaded. "He owns ships, though they are rather little ones!"

"Oh, well, it is much the same. Come, let us walk on; it is tedious to stand still. I thought you would be a failure in education," he continued, when she obeyed him and strolled ahead. "You never showed power that way. You remind me much of some of those women who think they are sure to be great actresses if they go on the stage, because they have a pretty face, and forget that what we require is acting. But you found your mistake, didn't you?"

"Don't taunt me, Charles." It was noticeable that the young schoolmaster's tone caused her no anger or retaliatory passion; far otherwise; there was a tear in her eye. "How is it you are at Penzance?" she enquired.

"I don't taunt you. I speak the truth, purely in a friendly way, as I should to anyone I wished well. Though for that matter I might have some excuse even for taunting you. Such a terrible hurry as you've been in. I hate a woman who is in such a hurry."

"How do you mean that?"

"Why—to be somebody's wife or other—anything's wife rather than nobody's. You couldn't wait for me, oh, no. Well, thank God, I'm cured of all that!"

"How merciless you are!" she said bitterly. "Wait for you? What does that mean, Charley? You never showed—anything to wait for—anything special towards me."

"O, come, Baptista; come!"

"What I mean is, nothing definite," she expostulated. "I suppose you liked me a little; but it seemed to me to be only a pastime on your part, and that you never meant to make an honourable engagement of it."

"There, that's just it! You girls expect a man to mean business at the first look. No man when he first becomes interested in a woman has any definite scheme of engagement to marry her in his mind, unless he is meaning a vulgar mercenary marriage. However, I *did* at last mean an honourable engagement, as you call it, come to that."

"But you never said so, and an indefinite courtship soon injures a woman's position and credit, sooner than you think."

"I must do it now," she said.

"Why?" he asked, dropping the off-hand masterful tone he had hitherto spoken in, and becoming earnest; still holding her arm, however, as if she were his chattel to be taken up or put down at will. "It is never too late to break off a marriage that is distasteful to you. Now, I'll say one thing, and it is truth: I wish you would marry me instead of him, even now, at the last moment, though you have served me so badly."

"Oh, it is not possible to think of that!" she answered hastily, shaking her head. "When I get home all will be prepared—it is ready even now—the things for the party, the furniture, Mr. Heddegan's new suit, and everything. I should require the courage of a tropical lion to go home there and say I wouldn't carry out my promise!"

"Then go, in heaven's name! But there would be no necessity for you to go home and face them in that way. If we were to marry, it would have to be at once, instantly, or not at all. I should think your affection not worth the having unless you agreed to come back with me to Truro this evening, where we could be married by license on Monday morning. And then no Mr. David Heddegan nor anybody else could get you away from me."

"I must go home by the Tuesday boat," she faltered. "What would they think if I did not come?"

"You could go home by that boat just the same. All the difference would be that I should go with you. You could leave me on the quay, where I'd have a smoke, while you went and saw your father and mother privately; you could then tell them what you had done, and that I was waiting not far off; that I was a schoolmaster in a fairly good position, and a young man you had known when you were at the Training College. Then I would come boldly forward, and they would see that it could not be altered, and so you wouldn't suffer a lifelong misery by being the wife of a wretched old gaffer you don't like at all. Now, honestly; you do like me best, don't you, Baptista?"

"Yes."

"Then we will do as I say."

She did not pronounce a clear affirmative. But that she consented to the novel proposition at some moment or other of that walk was apparent by what occurred a little later.

III.

An enterprise of such pith required, indeed, less talking than consideration. The first thing they did in carrying it out was to return to the railway station, where Baptista took from her luggage a small trunk of immediate necessities which she would in any case have required

after missing the boat. That same afternoon they travelled up the line to Truro.

Charles Stow (as his name was), despite his disdainful indifference to things, was very careful of appearances, and made the journey independently of her, though in the same train. He told her where she could get board and lodgings in the city; and with merely a distant nod to her of a provisional kind, went off to his own quarters and to see about the license.

On Sunday she saw him in the morning across the nave of the pro-cathedral. In the afternoon they walked together in the fields, where he told her that the license would be ready next day, and would be available the day after, when the ceremony could be performed as early after eight o'clock as they should choose.

His courtship, thus renewed after an interval of two years, was as impetuous, violent even, as it was short. The next day came and passed, and the final arrangements were made. Their agreement was to get the ceremony over as soon as they possibly could the next morning, so as to go on to Penzance at once and reach that place in time for the boat's departure the same day. It was in obedience to Baptista's earnest request that Stow consented thus to make the whole journey to Scilly by land and water at one heat, and not break it at Penzance; she seemed to be oppressed with a dread of lingering anywhere, this great first act of disobedience to her parents once accomplished, with the weight on her mind that her home had to be convulsed by the disclosure of it. To face her difficulties over the water immediately she had created them was, however, a course more desired by Baptista than by her lover: though for once he gave way.

The next morning was bright and warm as those which had preceded it. By six o'clock it seemed nearly noon, as is often the case in that part of England in the summer season. By nine they were husband and wife. They packed up and departed by the earliest train after the service; and on the way discussed at length what she should say on meeting her parents, Charley dictating the turn of each phrase. In her anxiety they had travelled so early that when they reached Penzance they found there were nearly two hours on their hands before the steamer's time of sailing.

Baptista was extremely reluctant to be seen promenading the streets of the watering-place with her husband till, as above stated, the household at Hugh Town should know the unexpected course of events from her own lips; and it was just possible, if not likely, that some Scillonian might be prowling about there, or even have come across the sea to look for her. To meet anyone to whom she was known and to have to reply to awkward questions about the strange young man at her side before her

well-framed announcement had been delivered at the proper time and place, was a thing she could not contemplate with equanimity. So, instead of looking at the shops and harbour, they went along the coast a little way.

The heat of the morning was by this time intense. They clambered up on some cliffs, and while sitting there, looking around at St. Michael's Mount and other objects, Charles said to her that he thought he would run down to the beach at their feet and take just one plunge into the sea.

Baptista did not much like the idea of being left alone; it was gloomy, she said; but he assured her he would not be gone more than a quarter of an hour at the outside, and she passively assented.

Down he went, disappeared, appeared again, and looked back. Then he again proceeded, and vanished, till, as a small waxen object, she saw him emerge from the nook that had screened him, cross the white fringe of foam, and walk into the undulating mass of blue. Once in the water, he seemed less inclined to hurry than before; he remained a long time; and, unable either to appreciate his skill or criticise his want of it at that distance, she withdrew her eyes from the spot and gazed at the still outline of St. Michael's—now beautifully toned in grey.

Her anxiety for the hour of departure, and to cope at once with the approaching incidents that she would have to manipulate as best she could, sent her into a reverie. It was now Tuesday; she would reach home in the evening—a very late time, they would say, but as the delay was a pure accident, they would deem her marriage with Mr. Heddegan to-morrow still practicable. Then Charles would have to be produced from the background. It was a terrible undertaking to think of, and she almost regretted her temerity in wedding so hastily that morning. The rage of her father would be so crushing; the reproaches of her mother so bitter; and, perhaps, Charles would answer hotly, and, perhaps, cause estrangement till death. There had obviously been no alarm about her at St. Mary's, or somebody would have sailed across to enquire for her. She had, in a letter written at the beginning of the week, spoken of the hour at which she intended to leave her country schoolhouse; and from this her friends had probably perceived that by such timing she would run a risk of losing the Saturday boat. She had missed it, and as a consequence sat here on the shore as Mrs. Charles Stow.

This brought her to the present, and she turned from the outline of St. Michael's Mount to look up for her husband's form. He was, as far as she could discover, no longer in the sea. Then he was dressing. By moving a few steps she could see where his clothes lay. But Charles was not beside them.

Baptista looked back again at the water in bewilderment, as if her senses were the victim of some sleight-of-hand. Not a speck or spot resembling a man's head or face showed anywhere. By this time she was alarmed, and her alarm intensified when she perceived a little beyond the scene of her husband's bathing a small area of water, the quality of whose surface differed from that of the surrounding expanse as the coarse vegetation of some foul patch in a mead differs from the fine green of the remainder. Elsewhere it looked flexuous, here it looked vermiculated and lumpy, and her marine experiences suggested to her in a moment that two currents met and caused a turmoil at this place.

She descended as hastily as her trembling limbs would allow. The way down was terribly long, and before reaching the heap of clothes it occurred to her that, after all, it would be best to run first for help. Hastening along in a lateral direction, she proceeded inland till she met a man, and soon afterwards two others. To them she exclaimed, "I think a gentleman who was bathing is in some danger. I cannot see him as I could. Will you please run and help him at once, if you will be so kind!"

She did not think of turning to show them the exact spot, indicating it vaguely by the direction of her hand, and still going on her way with the idea of gaining more assistance. When she deemed, in her faintness, that she had carried the alarm far enough, she faced about and dragged herself back again. Before reaching the now dreaded spot she met one of the men.

"We can see nothing at all, miss," he declared.

Having gained the beach, she found the tide in, and no sign of Charley's clothes. The other men whom she had besought to come had disappeared, it must have been in some other direction, for she had not met them going away. They, finding nothing, had probably thought her alarm a mere conjecture, and given up the quest.

Baptista sank down upon the stones near at hand. Where Charley had undressed was now sea. There could not be the least doubt that he was drowned, and his body sucked under by the current; while his clothes, lying within high water mark, had probably been carried away by the rising tide.

She remained in a stupor for some minutes, till a strange sensation succeeded the aforesaid perceptions, mystifying her intelligence, and leaving her physically almost inert. With his personal disappearance, the last three days of her life with him seemed to be swallowed up, also his image, in her mind's eye, waned curiously, receded far away, grew stranger and stranger, less and less real. Their meeting and marriage had been so sudden, unpremeditated,

adventurous, that she could hardly believe that she had played her part in such a reckless drama. Of all the few hours of her life with Charles, the portion that most insisted in coming back to memory was their fortuitous encounter on the previous Saturday, and those bitter reprimands with which he had begun the attack, as it might be called, which had piqued her to an unexpected consummation.

A sort of cruelty, an imperiousness, even in his warmth, had characterised Charles Stow. As a lover he had ever been a bit of a tyrant; and it might pretty truly have been said that he had stung her into marriage with him at last. Still more alien from her life did these reflections operate to make him; and then they would be chased away by an interval of passionate weeping and mad regret. Finally, there returned upon the confused mind of the young wife the recollection that she was on her way homeward, and that the packet would sail in three-quarters-of-an-hour.

Except the parasol in her hand, all she possessed was at the station awaiting her onward journey.

She looked in that direction; and entering one of those undemonstrative phases so common with her, walked quietly on.

At first she made straight for the railway; but suddenly turning she went to a shop and wrote an anonymous line announcing his death by drowning to the only person she had ever heard Charles mention as a relative. Posting this stealthily, and with a fearful look around her, she seemed to acquire a terror of the late events, pursuing her way to the station as if followed by a spectre.

When she got to the office she asked for the luggage that she had left there on the Saturday, as well as the trunk left on the morning just lapsed. All were put in the boat, and she herself followed. Quickly as these things had been done, the whole proceeding, nevertheless, had been almost automatic on Baptista's part, ere she had come to any definite conclusion on her course.

Just before the bell rang she heard a conversation on the pier, which removed the last shade of doubt from her mind, if any had existed, that she was Charles Stow's widow. The sentences were but fragmentary, but she could easily piece them out.

"A man drowned—swam out too far—was a stranger to the place—people in boat—saw him go down—couldn't get there in time."

The news was little more definite than this as yet; though it may as well be stated once for all that the statement was true. Charley, with the over-confidence of his nature, had ventured out too far for his strength, and succumbed in the absence of assistance, his lifeless body being at that moment suspended

in the transparent mid-depths of the bay. His clothes, however, had merely been gently lifted by the rising tide, and floated into a nook hard by, where they lay out of sight of the passers-by till a day or two after.

IV.

In ten minutes they were steaming out of the harbour for their voyage of four or five hours, at whose ending she would have to tell her strange story.

As Penzance and all its environing scenes disappeared behind Mousehole and St. Clement's Isle, Baptista's ephemeral, meteor-like husband impressed her yet more as a fantasy. She was still in such a trance-like state that she had been an hour on the little packet-boat before she became aware of the agitating fact that Mr. Heddegan was on board with her.

"Hee-hee! Well, the truth is, I wouldn't interrupt ye. 'I reckon she don't see me, or won't see me,' I said, 'and what's the hurry? She'll see enough o' me soon!' I hope ye be well, mee dear?"

He was a hale, well-conditioned man of about five-and-forty, of the complexion common to those whose lives are passed on the bluffs and beaches of an ocean isle. He extended the four quarters of his face in a genial smile, and his hand for a grasp of the same magnitude. She gave her own in surprised docility, and he continued:

"I couldn't help coming across to meet ye. What an unfortunate thing you missing the boat and not coming Saturday! They meant to have warned ye that the time was changed, but forgot it at the last moment. The truth is that I should have informed ye myself, but I was that busy finishing up a job last week, so as to have this week free, that I trusted to your father for attending to these little things. However, so plain and quiet as it is all to be, it really do not matter so much as it might otherwise have done, and I hope ye haven't been greatly put out. Now, if you'd sooner that I should not be seen talking to ye—if ye feel shy at all before strangers—just say. I'll leave ye to yourself till we get home?"

"Thank you much. I am indeed a little tired, Mr. Heddegan."

He nodded urbane acquiescence, strolled away immediately, and minutely inspected the surface of the funnel; till some female passengers of Hugh Town tittered at what they must have thought a rebuff—for the approaching wedding was known to many on St. Mary's Island, though to nobody elsewhere. Baptista coloured at their satire, and called him back, and forced herself to commune with him in, at least, a mechanically friendly manner.

The opening event had been thus different from her expectation, and she had adumbrated no act to meet it. Thus taken back, she

passively allowed circumstances to pilot her along ; and so the voyage was made.

It was near dusk when they touched the pier of Hugh Town, where several friends and neighbours stood awaiting them. Her father had a lantern in his hand. Her mother, too, was there, reproachfully glad that the delay had at last ended so simply. Mrs. Trewthen and her daughter went together along the Hugh, or promenade, to the house, rather in advance of her husband and Mr. Heddegan, who talked in loud tones which reached the women over their shoulders.

Some would have called Mrs. Trewthen a good mother ; but though well meaning, she was maladroit, and her intentions missed their mark. This might have been partly attributable to the slight deafness from which she suffered. Now, as usual, the chief utterances came from her lips.

"Ah, yes, I'm so glad, my child, that you've got over safe. It is all ready, and everything so well arranged, that nothing but misfortune could hinder you settling as, with God's grace, becomes ye. Close to your mother's door a'most, 'twill be a great blessing, I'm sure ; and I was very glad to find from your letters that you'd held your word sacred. That's right—make your word your bond always. Mrs. Wace seems to be a sensible woman. I hope the Lord will do for her as he's doing for you no long time hence. And how did ye get over the terrible journey from Exeter to Penzance? Once you'd done with the railway, of course, you seemed quite at home. Well, Baptista, conduct yourself seemly, and all will be well."

Thus admonished, Baptista entered the house, her father and Mr. Heddegan immediately at her back. Her mother had been so didactic that she had felt herself absolutely unable to broach the subject in the centre of her mind.

The familiar room, with the dark ceiling, the well-spread table, the old chairs, had never before spoken so eloquently of the times ere she knew or had heard of Charley Stow. She went upstairs to take off her things, her mother remaining below to complete the disposition of the supper, and attend to the preparation of to-morrow's meal, altogether composing such an array of pies, from pies of fish to pies of turnips, as was never heard of outside the Cornish Duchy. Baptista, once alone, sat down and did nothing ; and was called before she had taken off her bonnet.

"I'm coming," she cried, jumping up, and speedily disapparelling herself, brushed her hair with a few touches, and went down.

Two or three of Mr. Heddegan's and her father's friends had dropped in, and expressed their sympathy for the delay she had been subjected to. The meal was a most merry one except to Baptista. She had desired privacy,

and there was none ; and to break the news was already a greater difficulty than it had been at first. Everything around her, animate and inanimate, great and small, insisted that she had come home to be married ; and she could not get a chance to say nay.

One or two people sang songs, as overtures to the melody of the morrow, till at length bedtime came, and they all withdrew, her mother having retired a little earlier. When Baptista found herself again alone in her bedroom, the case stood as before : she had come home with much to say, and she had said nothing.

It was now growing clear, even to herself, that Charles being dead, she had not determination sufficient within her to break tidings which, had he been alive, would have imperatively announced themselves. And thus with the stroke of midnight came the turning of the scale ; her story should remain untold. It was not that upon the whole she thought it best not to attempt to tell it ; but that she could not undertake so explosive a matter. To stop the wedding now would cause a convulsion in Hugh Town little short of volcanic. Weakened, tired, and terrified as she had been by the day's adventures, she could not make herself the author of such a catastrophe. But how refuse Heddegan without telling? It really seemed to her as if her marriage with Mr. Heddegan were about to take place as if nothing had intervened.

Morning came. The events of the previous days were cut off from her present existence by scene and sentiment more completely than ever. Charles Stow had grown to be a special being of whom, owing to his character, she entertained rather fearful than loving memory. Baptista could hear when she awoke that her parents were already moving about downstairs. But she did not rise till her mother's rather rough voice resounded up the staircase as it had done on the preceding evening.

"Baptista ! Come, time to be stirring ! The man will be here, by Heaven's blessing, in three-quarters of an hour. He has looked in already for a minute or two—and says he's going to the church to see if things be well forward."

Baptista arose, looked out of the window, and took the easy course. When she emerged from the regions above she was arrayed in her new silk frock and bright shoes, wearing a linen jacket over the former for breakfasting, and her common slippers over the latter, not to spoil the new ones on the rough precincts of the dwelling.

It is unnecessary to dwell at any great length on this part of the morning's proceedings. She revealed nothing ; and married Heddegan, as she had given her word to do, on that appointed August day.

V.

Mr. Heddegan forgave the coldness of his bride's manner during and after the wedding ceremony, full well aware that there had been considerable reluctance on her part to acquiesce in this neighbourly arrangement, and, as a philosopher of long standing, holding that whatever Baptista's attitude now, the conditions would probably be much the same six months hence as those which ruled among other married couples.

An absolutely unexpected shock was given to Baptista's listless mind about an hour after the wedding service. They had nearly finished the midday dinner when the now husband said to her father, "We think of starting about two. And the breeze being so fair we shall bring up inside Penzance new pier about six at least."

"What—are we going to Penzance?" said Baptista. "I don't know anything of it."

"Didn't ye tell her?" asked her father of Heddegan.

It transpired that, owing to the delay in her arrival, this proposal, too, among other things, had in the hurry not been mentioned to her, except some time ago as a general suggestion that they would go somewhere. Heddegan had imagined that any trip would be pleasant, and one to the mainland the pleasantest of all.

She looked so distressed at the announcement that her husband willingly offered to give it up, though he had not had a holiday off the island for a whole year. Then she pondered on the inconvenience of staying at Hugh Town, where all the inhabitants were bonded, by the circumstances of their situation, into a sort of family party, which permitted and encouraged on such occasions as these oral criticism that was apt to disturb the equanimity of newly-married girls, and would especially worry Baptista in her strange situation. Hence, unexpectedly, she agreed not to disorganise her husband's plans for the wedding jaunt, and it was settled that, as originally intended, they should proceed in a neighbour's sailing boat to the metropolis of the district.

In this way they arrived at Penzance without difficulty or mishap. Bidding adieu to Jenkin and his man, who had sailed them over, they strolled arm in arm off the pier, Baptista silent, cold, and obedient. Heddegan had arranged to take her as far as Plymouth before their return, but to go no further than where they had landed that day. Their first business was to find an inn; and in this they had unexpected difficulty, since for some reason or other—possibly the fine weather—many of the nearest at hand were full of tourists and commercial travellers. He led her on till he reached a tavern which, though comparatively unpretending, stood in as attractive a spot as any in the town; and this, somewhat to their surprise

after their previous experience, they found apparently empty. The considerate old man, thinking that Baptista was educated to artistic notions, though he himself was deficient in them, had decided that it was most desirable to have, on such an occasion as the present, an apartment with "a good view" (the expression being one he had often heard in use among tourists); and he therefore asked for a favourite room on the first floor, from which a bow window protruded, for the express purpose of affording such an outlook.

The landlady, after some hesitation, said she was sorry that particular apartment was engaged; the next one, however, or any other in the house, was unoccupied.

"The gentleman who has the best one will give it up to-morrow, and then you can change into it," she added, as Mr. Heddegan hesitated about taking the adjoining and less commanding one.

"We shall be gone to-morrow, and shan't want it," he said.

Wishing not to lose customers, the landlady earnestly continued that since he was bent on having the best room, perhaps the gentleman would not object to move at once into the one they despised, since, though nothing could be seen from the window, the room was equally large.

"Well, if he doesn't care for a view," said Mr. Heddegan, with an air of a highly artistic man who did.

"Oh, no—I am sure he doesn't," she said. "I can promise that you shall have the room you want. If you would not object to go for a walk for half-an-hour, I could have it ready, and your things in it, and a nice tea laid in the bow window by the time you come back?"

This proposal was deemed satisfactory by the fussy old tradesman, and they went out. Baptista nervously conducted him in an opposite direction to her walk of the former day in other company, showing on her wan face, had he observed it, how much she was beginning to regret her sacrificial step for mending matters that morning.

She took advantage of a moment when her husband's back was turned to enquire casually in a shop if anything had been heard of the gentleman who was sucked down in the eddy while bathing.

The shopman said, "Yes, his body has been washed ashore," and had just handed Baptista a newspaper on which she discerned the heading, "A schoolmaster drowned while bathing," when her husband turned to join her. She might have pursued the subject without raising suspicion; but it was more than flesh and blood could do, and completing a small purchase, almost ran out of the shop.

"What is your terrible hurry, mee deer?" said Heddegan, hastening after.

"I don't know—I don't want to stay in shops," she gasped.

"And we won't," he said. "They be suffocating this weather. Let's go back and have some tay."

They found the much-desired apartment awaiting their entry. It was a sort of combination bed and sitting room, and the table was prettily spread with high tea in the bow-window, a bunch of flowers in the midst, and a best parlour chair on each side. Here they shared the meal by the ruddy light of the vanishing sun. But though the view had been engaged, regardless of expense, exclusively for Baptista's pleasure, she did not direct any keen attention out of the window. Her gaze

He jumped up like the anxious old man that he was, caught up his own hat from a back table, and without observing the other, hastened out and downstairs.

Left alone, she gazed and gazed at the back of the door, then spasmodically rang the bell. An honest-looking country maidservant appeared in response.

"A hat!" murmured Baptista, pointing with her finger. "It does not belong to us."

"Oh, yes, I'll take it away," said the young woman, hastily. "It belongs to the other gentleman."

She spoke with a certain awkward factitiousness, and took the hat out of the room. Baptista had recovered her outward composure. "The other gentleman?" she said. "Where is the other gentleman?"

"He is in the next room, ma'am. He removed out of this to oblige ye."

"How can you say so? I should hear him if he were there," said Baptista, sufficiently recovered to argue down an apparent untruth.

"He's there," said the girl, hardily.

"Then it is strange that he makes no noise," said Mrs. Heddegan, convicting the girl of falsity by a look.

"He makes no noise; but it is not strange," said the servant.

All at once a dread took possession of the bride's heart, like a cold hand laid thereon; for it flashed upon her that there was a possibility of reconciling the girl's

statement with her own knowledge of facts.

"Why does he make no noise?" she said, weakly.

The waiting-maid was silent, and looked at her questioner. "If I tell you, ma'am, you won't tell missis?" she whispered.

Baptista promised.

"Because he's a-lying dead!" said the girl. "He's the schoolmaster that was drowned yesterday."

"Oh!" said the bride, covering her eyes. "Then he was in this room till just now?"

"Yes," said the maid, thinking the young lady's agitation natural enough. "And I told missis that I thought she oughtn't to have done it, because I don't hold it right to keep visitors so much in the dark where death's concerned; but she said the gentleman didn't die of anything infectious; she was a poor, honest innkeeper's wife, she says, who had to get her living by making hay while the sun sheened. And owing to the drowned gentleman being



Handed Baptista a newspaper on which she discerned the heading: "A school-master drowned while bathing."

as often fell on the floor and walls of the room as elsewhere, and on the table as much as on either, beholding nothing at all.

But there was a change. Opposite her seat was the door, upon which her eyes presently became riveted like those of a little bird upon a snake. For, on a peg at the back of the door, there hung a hat; such a hat—surely, from its peculiar make, the actual hat—that had been worn by Charles. Conviction grew to certainty when she saw a railway ticket sticking up from the band. Charles had put it there—she had noticed the act.

Her teeth almost chattered; she murmured something incoherent. Her husband jumped up and said, "You are not well! What is it? What can I get ye?"

"Smelling salts!" she said, quickly and desperately: "at that chemist's shop you were in just now."

brought here, she said, it kept so many people away that we were empty, though all the other houses were full. So when your good man set his mind upon the room, and she would have lost good paying folk if he'd not had it, it wasn't to be supposed, she said, that she'd let anything stand in the way. Ye won't say that I've told ye, please m'm? All the linen has been changed, and as the inquest won't be till to-morrow, after you are gone, she thought you wouldn't know a word of it, being strangers here."

The returning footsteps of her husband broke off further narration. Baptista waved her hand, for she could not speak. The waiting-maid quickly withdrew, and Mr. Heddegan entered with the smelling salts and other nostrums.

"Be you any better?" he questioned quickly.

"I don't like the hotel," she exclaimed, almost simultaneously. "I can't bear it—it doesn't suit me!"

"Is that all that's the matter?" he returned, pettishly (this being the first time of his showing such a mood). "Upon my heart and life, such trifling is trying to any man's temper, Baptista! Sending me about from here to yond, and then when I come back saying ye don't like the place that I have sunk so much money and words to get for ye. Od dang it all, 'tis enough to—— But I won't say any more at present, mee deer, though it is just too much to expect to turn out o' the house now. We shan't get another quiet place at this time of the evening—every other inn in the town is bustling with rackety folk of one sort and 'tother, while here 'tis as quiet as the grave—the country, I would say. So bide still, d'ye hear, and to-morrow we shall be out of the town altogether—as early as you like."

The obstinacy of age had, in short, overmastered its complaisance, and the young woman said no more. The simple course of telling him that in the adjoining room lay a corpse, which had lately occupied their own, might, it would have seemed, been an effectual one without further disclosure, but to allude to *that* subject, however it was disguised, was more than Heddegan's young wife had strength for. Horror broke her down. In the unexpected contingency one thing only presented itself to her paralysed regard—that here she was doomed to abide, in a hideous situation between the dead husband and the living.

VI.

Kindly time had withdrawn the foregoing event three days from the present of Baptista Heddegan. It was ten o'clock in the morning; she had been ill, not in an ordinary or definite sense, but in a state of cold stupefaction, from which it was difficult to arouse her so much as to say a few sentences. When questioned she had replied that she was pretty well.

Their trip, as such, had been something of a failure. They had gone on as far as Falmouth, but here he had given way to her entreaties to return home. This they could not very well do without re-passing through Penzance, at which place they had now again arrived.

In the train she had seen a weekly local paper, and read there a paragraph detailing the inquest on Charles. It was added that the funeral was to take place at his native town of Redruth on Friday.

After reading this she had not shown any reluctance to enter the fatal neighbourhood of the tragedy, only stipulating that they should take their rest at a different lodging from the first; and now comparatively braced up and calm—indeed a cooler creature altogether than when last in the town, she said to David that she wanted to walk out for a while, as they had plenty of time on their hands.

"To a shop as usual, I suppose, mee deer?"

"Partly for shopping," she said. "And it will be best for you, dear, to stay in after trotting about so much, and have a good rest while I am gone."

He assented; and Baptista sallied forth. As she had stated, her first visit was made to a shop, a draper's. Without the exercise of much choice, she purchased a black bonnet and veil, also a black stuff gown; a black mantle she already wore. These articles were made up into a parcel which, in spite of the saleswoman's offers, her customer said she would take with her. Bearing it on her arm she turned to the railway, and at the station got a ticket for Redruth.

Thus it appeared that, on her recovery from the paralysed mood of the former day, while she had resolved not to utterly blast the happiness of her present husband by revealing the history of the departed one, she had also determined to indulge a certain odd, inconsequent, feminine sentiment of decency, to the small extent to which it could do no harm to any person. At Redruth she emerged from the railway carriage in the black attire purchased at the shop, having during the transit made the change in the empty compartment she had chosen. The other clothes were now in the handbox and parcel. Leaving these at the cloak-room, she proceeded onward, and after a wary survey reached the side of a hill whence a view of the burial ground could be obtained.

It was now a little before two o'clock. While Baptista waited a funeral procession ascended the road. Baptista hastened across, and by the time the procession entered the cemetery gates she had unobtrusively joined it.

In addition to the schoolmaster's own relatives (not a few), the paragraph in the newspapers of his death by drowning had drawn together many neighbours, acquaintances and onlookers.

Among them she passed unnoticed, and with a quiet step pursued the winding path to the chapel, and afterwards thence to the grave. When all was over, and the relatives and idlers had withdrawn, she stepped to the edge of the chasm. From beneath her mantle she drew a little bunch of forget-me-nots, and dropped them in upon the coffin. In a few minutes she also turned and went away from the cemetery. By five o'clock she was again in Penzance.

"You have been a martel long time!" said her husband, crossly. "I allowed ye a hour at most, mee deer."

"It occupied me longer," said she.

"Well—I reckon it is wasting words to complain. Hang it, ye look so tired and wisht that I can't find heart to say what I would!"

"I am—weary and wisht, David; I am. We can get home to-morrow for certain, I hope?"

"We can. And please God we will!" said Mr. Heddegan, heartily, as if he, too, were weary of his brief honeymoon. "I must be into business again on Monday morning at latest."

They left by the next morning steamer, and in the afternoon took up their residence in their own house at Hugh Town.

The hour that she reached the island it was as if a material weight had been removed from Baptista's shoulders. Her husband attributed the change to the influence of the local breezes after the hot-house atmosphere of the mainland. However that might be, settled here, a few doors from her mother's dwelling, she recovered in no very long time much of her customary bearing, which was never very demonstrative. She accepted her position calmly, and faintly smiled when her neighbours learned to call her Mrs. Heddegan, and said she seemed likely to become the leader of fashion in Hugh Town.

Her husband was a man who had made considerably more money by trade than her father had done; and perhaps the greater profusion of surroundings at her command than she had heretofore been mistress of, was not without an effect upon her. One week, two weeks, three weeks passed; and, being pre-eminently a young woman who allowed things to drift, she did nothing whatever either to disclose or conceal traces of her first marriage; or to learn if there existed possibilities—which there undoubtedly did—by which that hasty contract might become revealed to those about her at any unexpected moment.

While yet within the first month of her marriage, and on an evening just before sunset, Baptista was standing within her garden adjoining the house, when she saw passing along the road a personage clad in a greasy black coat and battered tall hat, which, common

enough in the slums of a city, had an odd appearance in St. Mary's. The tramp, as he seemed to be, marked her at once—bonnetless and unwrapped as she was her features were plainly recognisable—and with an air of friendly surprise came and leant over the wall.

"What! don't you know me?" said he.

She had some dim recollection of his face, but said that she was not acquainted with him.

"Why, your witness, to be sure, ma'am. Don't you mind the man that was mending the church window when you and your intended husband walked up to be made one; and the clerk called me down from the ladder, and I came and did my part by writing my name and occupation?"

Baptista glanced quickly around; her husband was out of earshot. That would have been of less importance but for the fact that the wedding witnessed by this personage had not been the wedding with Mr. Heddegan, but the one on the day previous.

"I've had a misfortune since then that's pulled me down," continued her friend. "But don't let me damp yer wedded joy by naming the particulars. Yes, I've seen changes since; though 'tis but a short time ago—let me see, only a month next week, I think; for 'twere the first or second day in August."

"Yes—that's when it was," said another man, a sailor, who had come up with a pipe in his mouth, and felt it necessary to join in (Baptista having receded to escape further speech.) "For that was the first time I set foot in Hugh Town; and her husband took her to him the same day."

A dialogue then proceeded between the two men outside the wall, which Baptista could not help hearing.

"Ay, I signed the book that made her one flesh," repeated the decayed glazier. "Where's her good man?"

"About the premises somewhere; but you don't see 'em together much," replied the sailor in an undertone. "You see, he's older than she."

"Older? I should never have thought it from my own observation," said the glazier. "He was a remarkably handsome man."

"Handsome? Well, there he is—we can see for ourselves."

David Heddegan had, indeed, just shown himself at the upper end of the garden; and the glazier, looking in bewilderment from the husband to the wife, saw the latter turn pale.

Now, that decayed glazier was a far-seeing and cunning man—too far-seeing and cunning to allow himself to thrive by simple and straightforward means—and he held his peace till he could read more plainly the meaning of this riddle, merely adding carelessly, "Well—marriage do alter a man, 'tis true. I should never ha' knowed him!"



The old man jumped up from his chair and began to caper round the room. "Oh, happy thing! How well it falls out! Ha, ha—the knot is cut—I see a way out of my trouble—ha—ha!"

He then stared oddly at the disconcerted Baptista, and moving on to where he could again address her, asked her to do him a good turn, since he once had done the same for her. Understanding that he meant money, she handed him some, at which he thanked her and instantly went away.

VII.

She had escaped exposure on this occasion ; but the incident had been an awkward one, and should have suggested to Baptista that sooner or later the secret must leak out. As it was, she suspected that at any rate she had not heard the last of the glazier.

In a day or two, when her husband had gone to the old town on the other side of the island, there came a gentle tap at the door, and the worthy witness of her first marriage made his appearance a second time.

"It took me hours to get to the bottom of the mystery—hours!" he said, with a gaze of deep confederacy which offended her pride very deeply. "But, thanks to a good intellect, I've done it. Now, ma'am, I'm not a man to tell tales, even when a tale would be so good as this. But I'm going back to the mainland again, and a little assistance would be as rain in a thirsty land."

"I helped you two days ago," began Baptista.

"Yes—but what was that, my good lady? Not enough to pay my passage to Penzance. I came over on your account, for I thought there was a mystery somewhere. Now I must go back on my own. Mind this—'twould be very awkward for you if your old man were to know. He's a queer temper, though he may be fond."

She knew as well as her visitor how awkward it would be ; and the hush-money she paid was heavy that day. She had, however, the satisfaction of watching the man to the steamer, and seeing him diminish out of sight. But Baptista perceived that the system into which she had been led of purchasing silence thus was one fatal to her peace of mind, particularly if it had to be continued.

Hearing no more from the glazier, she hoped the difficulty was past. But another week only had gone by when, as she was walking on the Hugh (the name given to the promenade), she met the same personage, in the company of a fat woman carrying a bundle.

"This is the lady, my dear," he said to his companion. "This, ma'am, is my wife. We've come to settle in the town for a time, if so be we can find room."

"That you won't do," said she. "Nobody can live here who is not privileged."

"I am privileged," said the glazier, "by my trade."

Baptista went on, but in the afternoon she received a visit from the man's wife. This

honest woman began to depict, in forcible colours, the necessity for keeping up the concealment.

"I will intercede with my husband, ma'am," she said. "He's a true man if rightly managed ; and I'll beg him to consider your position. 'Tis a very nice house you've got here," she added, glancing round, "and well worth a little sacrifice to keep it."

The unlucky Baptista staved off the danger on this third occasion as she had done on the previous two. But she formed a resolve that, if the attack were once more to be repeated, she would face a revelation—worse though that must now be than before she had attempted to purchase silence by bribes. Her tormentors, never believing her capable of acting upon such an intention, came again, but she shut the door in their faces. They retreated, muttering something ; but she went to the back of the house where David Heddegan was.

She looked at him, unconscious of all. The case was serious ; she knew that well ; and all the more serious in that she liked him better now than she had done at first. Yet, as she herself began to see, the secret was one that was sure to disclose itself. Her name and Charles's stood indelibly written in the registers ; and though a month only had passed as yet, it was a wonder that his clandestine union with her had not already been discovered by his friends. Thus spurring herself to the inevitable, she spoke to Heddegan :

"David, come indoors. I have something to tell you."

He hardly regarded her at first. She had discerned that during the last week or two he had seemed pre-occupied, as if some private business harassed him. She repeated her request. He replied with a sigh, "Yes, certainly, mee deer."

When they had reached the sitting-room and shut the door she repeated faintly, "David, I have something to tell you. I have something to confess. You will hate me for having so far deceived you ; but perhaps my telling you voluntarily will make you think a little better of me than you would do otherwise."

"Confession?" he said, awakening to interest. "Much confession you can have to make, mee deer, that have been in the world so short a time!"

She saw that he suspected nothing, and it made her task the harder. But on she went steadily. "It is about something that happened before we were married," she said.

"Indeed!"

"Not a very long time before—a short time. And it is about a lover," she faltered.

"I don't much mind that," he said, mildly. "In short, I was in hopes 'twas more."

"In hopes!"

"Well, yes.

This screwed her up to the necessary effort. "I met my old sweetheart. He scorned me, chid me, dared me, and I went and married him. We were coming straight here to tell you all what we had done; but he was drowned, and I thought I would say nothing about him: and I married you, David, for the sake of peace and quietness. I've tried to keep it from you, but have found I cannot. There—that's the substance of it, and you can never, never, forgive me, I am sure."

She spoke desperately. But the old man, instead of turning black or blue, or slaying her in his indignation, jumped up from his chair and began to caper around the room in quite an ecstatic emotion.

"Oh, happy thing! How well it falls out!" he exclaimed, snapping his fingers over his head. "Ha, ha—the knot is cut—I see a way out of my trouble—ha-ha!"

She looked fixedly at him, without uttering a sound, till, as he still continued smiling joyfully, she said, "Oh—what do you mean? It is done to torment me!"

"No—no! Oh, mee deer, your story helps me out of the most heart-aching quandary a poor man ever found himself in! You see, it is this—I've got a secret, too; and unless you had had one to tell, I could never have seen my way to tell mine!"

"What is yours—what is it?" she asked, with altogether a new view of things.

"Well—it is a bouncer; mine is a bouncer!" said he, looking on the ground and wiping his eyes.

"Not worse than mine?"

"Well—that depends upon how you look at it. Yours had to do with the past alone; and

I don't mind it. You see, we've been married a month, and it don't jar upon me as it would if we'd only been married a day or two. Now mine refers to past, present and future; so that——"

"Past, present and future!" she murmured, with misgiving. "It never occurred to me that you had a secret, too."

"But I have!" he said, shaking his head.

"Then tell it!" cried the young woman.

"I will—I will. But be considerate, I beg ye, mee deer. Well—I wasn't a bachelor when I married ye, any more than you were a spinster. Just as you were a widow-woman, I was a widow-man."

"Ah!" said she, with some surprise. "But is that all?—then we are nicely balanced," she added, relieved.

"No—it is not all. There's the point. I am not only a widower."

"Oh, David!"

"I am a widower with three children—three strapping girls—the eldest taller than you. Don't 'ee look so struck—dumb-like! It fell out in this way. I knew the poor woman, their mother, in Penzance for some years; and—to cut a long story short—I privately married her at last, just before she died. I kept the matter secret, but it is getting known among the



Three tall, hipless, shoulderless girls, dwindling in height, like a row of Pan pipes.

people here by degrees. I've long felt for the children—that it is my duty to have them here, and do something for them. I have not had courage to break it to ye, but I've seen lately that it would soon come to your ears, and that hev worried me."

"Are they educated?" asked the ex-school-mistress.

"No. I am sorry to say they have been much neglected; in truth, very much. And so I thought that by marrying a young school-mistress I should get someone in the house who

could teach 'em, and bring 'em into genteel condition, all for nothing. You see, they are growed up too tall to be sent to school."

"Oh, mercy!" she almost moaned. "Three great girls to teach the rudiments to, and have always in the house with me spelling over their books; and I hate teaching, it kills me. I am bitterly punished—I am, I am!"

"You'll get used to 'em, mee deer, and the balance of secrets—mine against yours—will comfort your heart with a sense of justice. I could send for 'em this week very well—and I will! In faith, I could send this very day. Baptista, you have relieved me of all my difficulty."

Thus the interview ended, so far as this matter was concerned. Baptista was too stupefied to say more, and when she went away to her room she wept from very mortification at Mr. Heddegan's duplicity. Education, the one thing she abhorred; the shame of it to delude a young wife so!

The next meal came round. As they sat, Baptista would not suffer her eyes to turn towards him. He did not attempt to intrude upon her reserve, but every now and then looked under the table and chuckled with satisfaction at the aspect of affairs. "How very well matched we be!" he said, comfortably.

Next day, when the steamer came in, Baptista saw her husband rush down to meet it; and soon after there appeared at her door three tall, hipless, shoulderless girls, dwindling in height and size from the eldest to the youngest, like a row of Pan pipes; at the head of them standing Heddegan. He smiled pleasantly through the grey fringe of his whiskers and beard, and turning to the girls said, "Now come forrard, and shake hands properly with your stepmother."

Thus she made their acquaintance, and he went out, leaving them together. On examination the poor girls turned out to be not only plain-looking, which she could have forgiven, but to have such a lamentably meagre intellectual equipment as to be hopelessly inadequate as companions. Even the eldest, almost her own age, could only read with difficulty words of two syllables; and taste in dress was beyond their comprehension. In the long vista of future years she saw nothing but dreary drudgery at her old trade without prospect of reward.

She went about quite despairing during the next few days—an unpromising, unfortunate

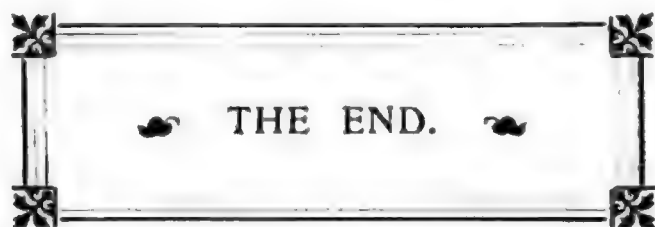
mood for a woman who had not been married six weeks. From her parents she concealed everything. They had been amongst the few acquaintances of Heddegan who knew nothing of his secret, and were indignant enough when they saw such a ready-made household foisted upon their only child. But she would not support them in their remonstrances. "No, you don't yet know all," she said.

Thus Baptista had sense enough to see the retributive fairness of this issue. For some time, whenever conversation arose between her and Heddegan, which was not often, she always said, "I am miserable, and you know it. Yet I don't wish things to be otherwise."

But one day when he asked, "How do you like 'em now?" her answer was unexpected. "Much better than I did," she said, quietly. "I may like them very much some day."

This was the beginning of a summer season for the chastened spirit of Baptista Heddegan. She had, in truth, discovered, underneath the crust of uncouthness and meagre articulation which was due to their Troglodytean existence, that her unwelcomed daughters had natures that were unselfish almost to sublimity. The harsh discipline accorded to their young lives before their mother's wrong had been righted, had operated less to crush them than to lift them above all personal ambition. They considered the world and its contents in a purely objective way, and their own lot seemed only to affect them as that of certain human beings among the rest, whose troubles they knew rather than suffered.

This was such an entirely new way of regarding life to a woman of Baptista's nature, that her attention, from being first arrested by it, became deeply interested. By imperceptible pulses her heart expanded in sympathy with theirs. The sentences of her tragi-comedy, her life, confused till now, became clearer daily. That in humanity, as exemplified by these girls, there was nothing to dislike, but infinitely much to pity, she learnt with the lapse of each week in their company. She grew to like the girls of unpromising exterior, and from liking she got to love them; till they formed an unexpected point of junction between her own and her husband's interests, generating a sterling friendship, at least, between a pair in whose existence there had threatened to be neither friendship nor love.



















A LION TAMER'S ROMANCE.

A SHORT STORY OF MARRIED LIFE.

By ELMORE ELLIOTT PEAKE.

Illustrated by A. PEARSE.

THAT peculiar circus aroma—the blended exhalations of animals, bruised grass, freshly-turned earth and sawdust, so sweet to the nostril of the small boy—was present in even the dressing-tent. With it, however, were mingled the more pungent odours of liniments and face-paints; and occasionally the acrid fumes of burnt hair drifted from a booth where some female bareback rider or trapezist was making an over-hasty toilet. From the main tent came the dulled blare of bands, the crack of ring-masters' whips, the trumpeting of performing elephants, cries of vendors, and ever and anon the rumbling applause of the multitude.

The dressing-tent itself hummed like a beehive. Through the wide, curtained doorway leading to the big tent there flowed, in opposite directions, two streams of painted, powdered, bedizened humanity. The incoming performers were either flushed with triumph or drooping with fatigue; the outgoing ones were high-strung and expectant or coldly confident. The heat in the stuffy dressing-rooms was certainly fierce, and the circus-folk remained inside no longer than their toilets required.

Not far from the entrance to the main tent three clowns sat on a trunk, awaiting their call. Their eyes shone through grotesque circles of white paint with a fairly sinister glitter, seen thus close at hand, and made them look more like demons than boobies. On the shoulder of one of these men—her husband, apparently—leaned the Human Fly, a shapely young woman in lavender tights, swinging by a strap the strangely soled shoes in which she was soon to take her daring head-down walk. In front of this group a green, scaly, snaky thing writhed on the ground, as if in its death-throes. It was a young contortionist, limbering up for his turn, and he was sharply directed now and

then by a word from an older, gloomy man in plain clothes, who carried one arm in a sling.

A moment later the Strong Man waddled by—an unsightly, abnormal creature, with huge knots of muscle bulging out all over his body, a red bull-neck, and a face yet purple from his recent suicidal feat of lifting twelve grown men. The Human Fly at once ceased her chatter, for the Strong Man was her cue, and listened for her call. It came sharply and clearly an instant later, and she hurried away.

On a bench not far off, and also listlessly watching the contortionist, sat two people who seemed to be the objects of some curiosity from the passing performers. They were unmistakably a part of the show, yet seemed set apart by something from their fellow-workers. The man, who was perhaps thirty years old, wore a cap and a plain lounge suit of navy-blue. Dark hair curled around a studious, serious face, set with soft, intelligent eyes. In one hand he carried a whip.

The young woman wore a dressing-cloak, which enveloped her from head to toe. Yet a dimpled sky-blue knee, occasionally peeping out through a fold in the cloak, revealed the fact that she, also, was in a short, flimsy dress like most of the other women in the tent.

He sat in silence, with his brow in a thoughtful frown, and nervously nibbled the ends of his short moustache. Now and then he flicked his toe with his whip, expressing impatience or restlessness.

"It's been a long time since you had those things on, Margaret," said he, finally. "When I married you, I promised your mother that you should never again dress in this circus attire, nor go into another cage of animals."

"Yes, dear, but the promise was voluntary; mamma didn't ask for it. And she would release you instantly from it under the

present circumstances. Why, if I were to fail you in this crisis, Frank, she would be the first to shame me. Ah, dear, much as I hate this costume, I would willingly wear it the rest of my days to lift this load of debt off your shoulders, and make sure that those horrid Germans in Berlin wouldn't take our animals away from us, and see you smile again as you used to—the way you smiled, boy, the first day I ever saw you, sitting there in the cage at Hagenbeck's, between those two old moth-eaten sinners, Flossie and Jerome. You stole my heart that minute, you rogue, and you have never given it back yet."

He pressed her hand responsively, and smiled.

"They were two good old lions, if they were a little rusty," said he. "I smiled because the manager had told me that I would have to look out for my laurels, with you sharing that turn with me. He was right, too." He paused and grew grave again. "Your doing this turn with me now will mean forty pounds a week more for us. In fact, I couldn't have closed with old Salisbury without promising that. But if it weren't for my debts, Margaret—if it weren't a matter of honour, no forty pounds or ten times forty would——"

She put her hand endearingly over his lips. "Don't I know all that, sweetheart, better than you?"

They had joined the big show at Manchester, two days before. To make this junction, they had come from London with the menagerie of trained animals. The beasts had required some rest, and to-day's was to be their first performance under the new management. It was, in fact, to be Mrs. Stockton's first performance under any management since her marriage, five years before.

"Are you nervous?" he asked.

She thrust a bare hand and forearm from beneath her cloak. "Look at that! As steady as yours, I dare say."

Before he could answer, the man who had been calling the performers as their "turns" came on, approached and said, more respectfully than was his wont: "Professor Stockton, all ready now for you, sir." Stockton smiled at the title, which he disliked, murmured an *au revoir* to his wife, and hastened away.

Meanwhile, in the main tent, on a platform between the two rings, there had been

erected with magical rapidity, after the Jap jugglers had retired, a circular cage forty feet in diameter. Leading to this cage, from the animal-tent, was a runway of steel netting, roofed over. Three minutes after leaving his wife, Stockton stood at the mouth of this runway, just out of the spectators' sight, with each hand upon the bushy head of a lion. Behind him was a fantastic and rather gruesome double file of lions, tigers, leopards, pumas, jaguars, boarhounds, poodles, terriers, a zebra, a donkey and a baby elephant. At intervals assistants were posted, with iron rods in their hands, to preserve order.

The band struck up a weird, uncanny march, shrewdly adapted to play on the nerves of the audience. Stockton faced to the front, and by a single low word of command set the nailed and toothed procession in motion. Each assistant halted just outside the cage. The baby elephant, bringing up the rear, crossed the threshold; the grated door swung to behind him with a dismal clank, and the animal-trainer stood alone, like another Daniel, in the midst of the fierce, mismated family, with absolutely no weapon but the small whip in his hand.

Without pause, he led the striped, spotted train three times round the cage. The four tawny monarchs of the jungle strode along at the head in dull-eyed majesty, with dignified, measured tread, solemnly oblivious to tiers of puny bipeds, called men. Behind the lions came a quartette of tigers, surly, and soured by ceaseless travel and long imprisonment, yet vigilant and not without a kind of savage dignity. They moved along with a peculiar shoulder-motion ominously suggestive of the mighty muscles strung beneath their striped hides, like bands of steel needing but a touch to spring them in destruction. Next came the jaguars, pumas and leopards—the lesser cats—skulking closely to one another with compressed tails and indrawn flanks, swinging their cruel, round heads ceaselessly from side to side, drawing back their whiskered lips in hideous, mirthless, satanic smiles, snarling and snapping malevolently, and turning upon the audience great, yellow, baleful eyes, which seemed to glow with an eternal, unquenchable hatred of all things that be.

Yet the man at the front never once turned to look at them (so it seemed), but left their good behaviour to their honour. And the tiny poodles and terriers scampered



whip, he viciously drew back his lips until all his yellow fangs were exposed to view, and bellowed with rage.

Yet his whole attitude belied his warlike demonstrations, for he shrank from the master above him; his flanks quaked; his eyes, full of hate, were also full of fear; and he cut a very mean figure, indeed, crouching there upon the ground, for a king of beasts. Finally, Stockton, never losing patience, but bound to conquer—as he must or abdicate his power for ever—defly slipped a wire loop over the recalcitrant's under jaw, and gave a steady, strong pull. Smarting with pain, Leo then consented, reluctantly and with woefully bad grace, to return to the velocipede and finish the tiger's ride.

The only mishap was with a beautiful female jaguar whose trick was to leap from her chair to a low pedestal, twenty feet distant, and maintain her balance. Ambitious to do her best, she crouched a moment with taut muscles and fixed eyes, calculating her distance; then she sailed as gracefully through the air as a bird, tail and hind feet streaming out behind. Alas for her noble effort! In her zeal she overleaped a trifle, and struck the further edge of the goal. For a second or two she clawed desperately at the wood to save herself, and then toppled over and fell to the floor.

Catlike, she landed on her feet. But the disgrace was too much for her explosive temper. Something flashed through the air like the glint of a vanishing humming-bird. It was the jaguar's paw, and the next instant the heavy pedestal rose in the air at an angle of thirty degrees.

It struck the side of the cage with an impact which set the bars to dancing, and the animals as well.

For a moment the outraged beast glared furiously about her, as if challenging the world to combat; then, overcome with shame at her failure, she limped back on three feet to her chair, and sullenly licked her wounded paw. Smiling at his grim pet as an indulgent father smiles at a spoiled child, Stockton crossed the cage, and gently took the bruised member in his hand. He had no assurance that its lightning quickness and volcanic power, just illustrated so amazingly, would not next be turned against his face or breast, maiming him for life, or worse. But a chance like this was only one of the minor features of his profession—one of the little things which kept it from being irksome. He did

not take the risk gratuitously. It was necessary for him to show this feline queen that her burst of royal temper had no power to awe such as he.

Their tricks over, the four-footed actors were marshalled into line again, and turned into the runway, down which they disappeared pell-mell, knowing that scraps of meat awaited them in their cages as a reward of merit. Stockton himself remained on the platform.

The last tail-tuft had hardly vanished before the cage itself, assailed on every side by a gang of workmen, like ants swarming around a dead beetle, had also disappeared. At the same moment six richly-caparisoned horses swung into view, drawing a large, gilded cage which had appeared that morning in the parade. In it were six magnificent specimens of the king of beasts. Very slowly, and to fitting music, the pageant made the circuit of the hippodrome, and then drew up on the stage. The horses were unhooked and led a short distance away, the music was silenced, and a short, thick-set man stepped forward and faced the area of reserved seats.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began in stentorian tones, "you behold in this cage six superb specimens of what is known as the man-eating lion—an animal which, in its native state, lives a solitary life, and eats nothing but human flesh, when it can get it. The lightest of these animals weighs seven hundred and fifty pounds. They were captured after attaining maturity, and are therefore absolutely and positively untamable. They were fed last night at eleven o'clock, a very light meal. They will not be fed again until eleven o'clock to-night, after the evening performance. You will thus understand that at this hour their hunger, which is Nature's goad to ferocity in man or beast, is very keen.

"You will now have the great privilege, ladies and gentlemen, of witnessing an exhibition never before seen in this country, and one which the management takes more pride in presenting than any other on the programme. Mrs. Stockton, the professor's wife, will be bound hand and foot, and thrown into this den of wild beasts, before which even the prophet Daniel, I think, would have quailed and begged to be excused. But, first—suicidal and incredible as it may seem to you—Professor Stockton himself, taking his life in his hands, will enter the cage, and goad these ferocious man-eating



held her cloak at the throat tightened convulsively for the fraction of a second, as if she could not let it go; then, like a butterfly bursting from its shell, she stepped out of the garment and handed it to a waiting attendant. The next instant she was through the curtain, and at the focal-point of ten thousand pairs of eyes.

But the first man in the first row, who could have almost touched her with his hand as she passed, and who stared at her as he had stared at the Wild Man of Borneo in the side-show a little while before, was no more to her than the tiny blurred figure in the most distant seat in the tent. There was no blushing, no confusion, no shrinking now; and she walked down the hippodrome as calmly and unaffectedly as any lady could cross her parlour. Yet every nerve was as taut as a bow-string.

There was something irresistible about that little figure in baby-blue, with the bonny bow of ribbon in her hair. The contrast between her and the painted, mincing women who had come up before was so pleasing; there was such an unexpected innocence in her face, such unstudied grace in her slender, girlish form, something so tender and fragile about her, that the audience, after catching its breath, burst into thunderous and protracted applause.

Stockton stepped forward with a smile, and helped her up the steps. The orator bowed smilingly, and seeing the uselessness of an introduction, dispensed with it. However, he briefly addressed the reserved seats once more.

"In order that there may be no suspicion of trickery, it is the request of both the management and Professor Stockton that a committee of three or four gentlemen come forward from the audience and bind Mrs. Stockton. Will some of you kindly do this at once, so that the performance may go on without delay? We want men, not boys."

After a short delay, and a little more urging from the showman, an elderly man in the front row arose. The ice broken, three others quickly followed, and the four crossed the ring and ascended the platform. The old gentleman received a rope from Stockton's hands and proceeded to wind it around Margaret's waist and arms. He seemed to have some trouble, however, in adjusting the rough bond to her tender,

bare flesh. For a full minute he fumbled away with fingers that surely trembled; then, to the general amazement, he turned suddenly away and let the rope slip to her feet.

"I can't do it," he said, huskily. "If anything should happen to the child——" He broke off and left the stage. Instead of returning to his seat he made swiftly for the main exit of the tent. Many, doubtless, thought it the trick of an accomplice, but Stockton, with compressed lips, looked sharply at his wife to note the effect of this untoward incident. Then he nodded to the next man; and he, not so squeamish, quickly bound the girl hand and foot. Stockton held in his right hand the usual light whip, with loaded handle. In his left, secured to the wrist by a leather thong, he held a short piece of iron, braided over with horsehair—a device to be thrust into the mouth of any animal attempting to bite. In a side-pocket of his coat he carried a small pistol, loaded with a blank cartridge. In his hip-pocket was a weapon which he carried only in this trick—a heavy English bulldog revolver, loaded with a ball as big as the end of his thumb.

As he mounted the short flight of steps to the door of the cage, the sextet of lions made a hair-raising rush to that end. Their conduct certainly sustained the bloodthirsty reputation given them by the orator, and goading them into fury seemed a most superfluous task. With eyes scintillating fear and hate, they snarled and growled, opened their cavernous mouths, and emitted the most dismal groans.

Without the least hesitation, yet leisurely, Stockton opened the door and, with a quick side-motion, stepped within. The six pairs of deep-set yellow eyes took on a sullen, muddy hue; the six shaggy heads were lowered in doubt and anger. Then, as Stockton took a step forward, the six lithe bodies, still standing at bay, began to retreat, inch by inch. Here and there a great red mouth, armed with four ivory poniards, silently opened and shut in the very quintessence of impotent rage.

Stockton slowly pressed them back, wantonly taunting them apparently at every step. In reality, every movement of his, to the crooking of a finger, had been studied and practised beforehand; and as he moved forward he read and re-read every moment each cruel brute face before him. What if



sound rolled forth, roar on roar like billow on billow, until even the hardened horses, which had drawn in the cage, began to prance nervously, and from the distant menagerie tent came in sympathetic answer the harsh scream of cockatoos and the shrill trumpeting of elephants.

The vibrant chords in Afric's deep throat awoke yet another answer—a shudder in hundreds of human breasts. One of these breasts was, ominously enough, that of the trainer himself. An hour before he had been tempted to substitute a safer lion for Afric. But Afric was the largest and finest of the lot, and to remove him seemed like skimming the cream from the act. There was something else to be considered, too—the effect of such a step on the lions, on the show proprietors, on himself, and above all on Margaret. To make her afraid before she entered the cage would be as good as to kill her. Yet as he now faced the enraged brute, unmindful of the other five behind him, who might even then be plotting his death, a pang of regret shot through Stockton's breast. Ought he not even now to make the change?

Another of those heart-wrenching roars from Afric would have answered the question in the affirmative. The roar did not come, and trusting to chance, the fickle goddess in whom members of his profession must so often rest their faith, Stockton backed out of the cage, even as people back out of the presence of two-footed kings. He had scarcely closed the door before the six lions threw themselves, in one furious rush, against the bars with the shock of an earthquake; and in savage regret of their cowardice and their victim's easy escape they bit and clawed the iron in a way to set one's teeth on edge.

It is small wonder that more than one man, as he looked at the slight figure in blue bound hand and foot, waiting to dare the fury of these brutes, should have twisted uneasily in his seat, snapped his watch, glanced anxiously at his wife and daughter, and heartily wished the whole nerve-racking business over.

Owing to her shackles, Margaret had to be lifted to the platform of the cage. As Stockton reached forward to unlatch the door, she unexpectedly turned her face up to his.

"Kiss me, dear!" she whispered.

It was a part of the act which Stockton had forgotten—a stage trick to which he had

reluctantly consented in order to please the managers. In his present mood this mockery of love seemed something sacrilegious, and he was about to ignore Margaret's request when her shining eyes riveted his attention. They told him that the kiss was to be no mockery for *her*. Half unnerved, he laid his lips upon hers, starting at their coldness. A hush fell over the vast concourse, and here and there a woman's handkerchief went up to her eyes.

"Margaret, Afric is dangerous to-day!" said Stockton, in a low, haggard tone. "I don't want you to go in unless you are absolutely fearless."

"I am not afraid!" she answered, softly. He hesitated an instant, and then quickly opened the door, and slipped her, head first, into the cage. As he did so, he secretly cut the rope which bound her ankles. The deft stroke, arranged in advance, was unseen even by the committee on the platform. Another thing which the committee did not see was a short stick, lying on the floor of the cage close to the door, which Margaret seized and concealed against her side as she was slipped along. Then the door clanged, ruthlessly shut, and the helpless woman lay at the mercy of the great cats.

Five of them prowled suspiciously about the prostrate, motionless form, using nose and eye, now venturing close, now shying off in a kittenish way. Finally one of them, braver than the rest, cautiously thrust forth a huge paw and laid it, experimentally, upon one of the little sandalled feet. Margaret paid no heed until she felt the sharp point of a claw through the silk; then she lifted her stick an inch or two—not enough for the audience to see—and the inquisitive paw was withdrawn.

Afric was not of the five. He lay in his corner with his head pressed to the floor between his great spreading paws. To the spectator he looked the personification of innocence and indolence. But there were two pairs of eyes, nearer at hand and better versed in feline craft, which never lifted from the lion. One pair was Margaret's, the other her husband's.

The latter, to heighten the effect of the act, made a show of leaving the cage. At the same instant he caught Afric's eye, and turned distinctly paler. The dreaded change in the lion was coming on, and Stockton knew that his well-beloved lay in the Valley of the Shadow of Death.



anticipation ; his back slowly arched like a mighty spring ; his muscles grew tense ; his tail, at first moving softly to and fro, became as rigid as a bar of iron ; his tongue swiftly moistened his fevered, bloodthirsty lips.

Margaret, seeing all this, and reading its dreaded significance, was paralysed with fear, as sometimes the bravest are. The very blood in her veins turned to ice, and she lay like one in a nightmare, helplessly awaiting her doom. Hark ! There floated into her ebbing consciousness the soft, sweet, distant strains of what she fancied must be angelic music. Then she knew better. It was the band playing. The sound aroused her, and, struggling fiercely with the incubus which weighed her down, she cried "Frank ! Frank ! Save me !" in a low, piteous tone.

The words which came instantly back seemed, even in her benumbed state, a marvel of intensity, and she knew they were meant to shake her out of her fatal lethargy.

"Get up, Margaret, and dodge him when he springs ! I will do the rest !"

Her fear fled. She quickly rose to a sitting posture, threateningly lifted her stick as far as her tied arms would permit, and with a short, imperative "Down, Afric !" struggled to her feet.

But Afric knew no master now. Just as Margaret reached an upright position the cage jerked violently. It was the push of Afric's spring, and the next instant his nine hundred pounds of incarnate fury were launched at the fragile girl with catapultic force, his jaws wide distended, his claws bristling in the air. He had aimed at her throat, but the give of the cage had weakened his spring, and he struck a little below his mark. His gaping jaws closed over Margaret's side, and his long, yellow fangs sank out of sight, like an assassin's knife, in her snowy breast.

Yet only in appearance. At that instant Stockton, who had bounded into the cage without stopping to close the door behind

him, caught his falling wife and discharged his heavy revolver in the maddened lion's ear. The big ball crashed through its brain, and the great shaggy head sank slowly to the floor in an instantaneous and painless death.

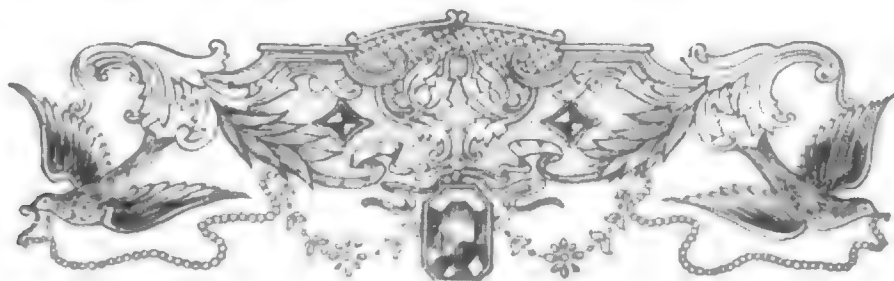
For two or three seconds, which seemed like minutes, there was not a sound or motion in that vast amphitheatre. Stockton, with his precious burden pressed to his breast, held at bay the other lions, which Afric's example had stirred to revolt. With dilated nostrils and gleaming eyes they fiercely sniffed the air. Then one of them, slinking doubtfully forward, eagerly lapped up a few red drops from the floor. Stockton, avoiding all signs of fear, backed slowly out of the cage, and closed the door. Margaret murmured something. He set her upon her feet. She steadied herself—for her blue bodice was stained with crimson—advanced, bowed and smiled. Then, as a broadside of frenzied applause split the air, she ran lightly across the ring to the dressing-tent entrance, skipped through the curtains, and—sank in a swoon upon a heap of canvas. Stockton, following closely behind, lifted her once more and carried her swiftly to their dressing-room.

"How badly are you hurt, Margaret ?" he asked, in an agony of suspense, as he loosened her corsage.

"Not bad. I've been bitten worse before. But, oh, Frank," she burst out, with a flood of tears, "I've lost my nerve ! I can never enter that cage again."

"You shouldn't enter it again," said he fervently, "if you had the nerve of the world."

Yet he himself had to enter the cage, that night and for many days and nights thereafter, and play with those four-footed murderers as if they were kittens. Such is the life of an animal-trainer. And Margaret would wait for him, confident that no harm could come to one so fearless, yet would shrink, womanlike, when an infuriated roar would reach her ear, and murmur a prayer.























The Dean, as he faced the men before him on this auspicious evening, realised that success had set its seal upon them.

Then the beautifully-laid dinner table, with its shaded candles, faded from before the old Dean's eyes, and with it every thought of the world or its ambition.

A distinguished company they looked, as each man took his appointed seat. A young cavalry officer sat at the Dean's right hand. On the left of him was a rising barrister, while the editor and proprietor of a well-known London daily paper faced the only other ecclesiastic present save the Dean. Then in order came a rising M.P., and opposite him a novelist, who had just sprung into fame. A vacant seat faced the Dean at the foot of the table.

"I expected one other," said the Dean, "as you all see by the empty chair, but I fear he is unable to come. And, by the way," he added, with a twinkle in his eye, "I see I have committed a grievous blunder in placing Jack Carlton, Conservative Member for Hampshire, beside Grant, proprietor of a well-known Liberal organ. I do hope," added the Dean, "it will not end in blows."

"Or," suggested the M.P., laughingly, "an action for slander."

"If I only thought it would," chimed in Trenham, the barrister, "I'd hold a watching brief."

A general laugh followed this sally.

"Do you remember the evening, sir, years ago," asked the young Vicar, "when we all bunked evening prep., and you found us singing carols for money?"

"Yes," said the Dean, "I'm afraid you all did many reprehensible things in those days, which sometimes caused me to be very ashamed of you."

"Yes, Ted," chimed in Grant, the editor, "and I remember you got whacked twice as much as any of us, for saying that you were not singing."

The Dean nodded.

"Which was perfectly true," insisted the young Reverend, with a broad grin. "It has always been the one regret of my life. I have never been able to sing a note, but I certainly joined in the fun that night."

"And shared the oof," said the M.P.

"And trumped up a paltry defence at the trial," added the barrister.

"And suffered the sentence," ended the Dean, quietly. "I think he sang out that time, at any rate."

"Bravo, sir," chorused the others.

"The Dean's got you there, Master Ted."

"Yes," replied Master Ted; "I still repeat that was the first time that evening that I sang."

"Answer me this——" said the barrister.

"Now for a leading question, and beware of trifling with the law," croaked the M.P. in anticipation of a coming debate.

"Who sings the hymns in your new church?" continued the counsel remorselessly.

"The choir," innocently replied the reverend witness.

"Have you never assisted them—say, started them?"

"Yes, once."

"You own then," persisted the counsel, laying his fish knife down with the air of a man who brings a fact home beyond dispute, "that you assisted the choir, technically, assisted them in harmony?"

"That was my harmless intention, but the result was the most appalling discord ever heard inside my church," he concluded amid a perfect yell from his old schoolfellows.

The Dean chuckled to hear the old cut and thrust; the dinner was really going very well.

"I suppose," remarked the editor graciously to the novelist, "your limited time always enables you sufficient leisure to read your own books?"

"Oh, dear, no," rejoined the novelist, without moving a muscle; "the public save me that trouble. I only have to write them."

"It will come to blows," laughed the Dean. "I said it would."

"There was one man," the barrister broke in with, "one man I used to think would do better than any of us. What a sparkling and brilliant wit he had; how clever he was."

"You mean Denny Bickton," said the Dean.

"Yes," replied the barrister.

"What chums we were, do you remember?" asked the editor.

"Yes," said the Dean.

"I can't think what has become of him," the editor went on; "I thought I saw him in Cheapside to-day, but of course it couldn't have been; very like him though, but awfully thin and shabby, all doubled up. I nearly

The Dean smiled. "How like him," he said.

"'So,' quoth Bickton, 'good Sir John, show us of your quality. Something that would grace a City Company's princely feed, and yet not cripple the holiday resources of a hard-working schoolboy. You know the sort of thing which appeals to us. Something in pounds with the guineas graciously withdrawn for cash.'

"'Who is it for?' asked Sir John, when he could get a word in edgeways.

"'For a right reverend parson,' said Bickton solemnly.

"'Oh, is that all,' said Sir John, relieved. 'I thought it was for the Archbishop of Canterbury at first.'

"'Well,' admitted Bickton, 'there's even hopes he may be that at last.'

"Sir John looked at Denny and said,

"'Some day I should not be surprised if you dined with the Lord Mayor.'

"'That,' replied Denny, 'will be very nice, but it is a matter of speculation; now our dinner off this service will be a dead certainty.'

"'Ah! it should have been,' rejoined the Dean, as the editor finished. "Poor Denny, precocious, impudent, clever, and yet withal a failure."

"I am in rather a difficulty," the editor remarked, a few minutes later, "about my new monthly illustrated."

"It's a big scheme," agreed the Dean; "but I think from what I have heard it will be a big success. What is the difficulty you refer to?"

"I want a sub-editor to take almost entire responsibility; the salary is a handsome one, so, of course, hundreds will be in for it. The difficulty lies in the choice of the right man. I suppose you couldn't advise me, sir?"

"I will think it over," said the Dean.

The man-servant entered—a gentleman wished to see the Dean.

"What is his name, Seaton?"

"I think he said Bickton, sir."

There was a movement of sudden interest round the table.

"Show him up here," said the Dean.

"The gentleman wished to see you privately, sir; he is not—"

"Is not what?" demanded the Dean.

"Is not in evening dress, sir."

The Dean turned to the others as the servant shut the door.

"How strange to come at such a time. I suppose I must fetch him up myself."

"Yes, sir, we do want to see him. Don't let him go without seeing us."

"Anyway, he is still alive," said the editor.

The Dean paused at the door.

"If I can persuade him to come up I will," he said.

There was a general buzz when the door closed.

"What an extraordinary time to turn up, when dinner is over," remarked the M.P., lighting a cigar.

"And not dressed!" said the editor; "too bad!"

"Too busy," replied the barrister. "I know what that means."

"Very bad form, anyway," the others all agreed upon that point at least.

"Tell you what," said the M.P., "we'll give him the benefit of one of his own inventions."

"Which?" asked the others.

"The old remedy for fellows who sulked, or would not apologise: surprise party and court-martial."

"Hide in between the bookcases, draw the curtains, spring out on him, and a frog-march up and down the room till he says he's sorry."

"Right you are. Why, it is like the old days."

Six figures disappeared into three niches on either side of the room. The curtains were drawn not a moment too soon, for the door was opened, and the Dean's cheery voice was heard saying:

"My dear boy, why didn't you come up; they're all——" and then the Dean saw the empty room and guessed the old trick. But why didn't they spring out. "They're all——" the Dean was about to give them away and add "hiding."

"All gone!" said a weak voice.

Surely that wasn't Denny's voice.

They just peeped through the curtains that let out tell-tale little wreaths of tobacco smoke.

Was that Denny? In a ready-made suit of shoddy worn-out at that, with his hair no longer bright, but streaked with grey, with a lined face and a starved look, yes—positively starved. For the first time, the frog-march didn't take place. Perhaps the same thoughts made the Dean silent. The forlorn-looking figure surveyed the table, bright with the shaded candles, in a dazed way; it seemed dawning upon him that the room was empty, the dinner was over.



that I could send them to school. And I went without any new clothes so that I could afford to keep the home over us.

"Then Salt & Co. saw by my clothes that I was getting poorer and shabbier every day, so they told me I must either take two pounds a week, or go! How could I? I dare not be out of work, even for a week, with those four depending on me—so I took it."

The Dean was silent, but the anxious look on his face had given place to a look of infinite pity.

The editor behind the curtain swore under his breath that Salt & Co. had received their very last order for paper from him.

"Then," the husky, weakened voice continued, "I made up the ten shillings by going without my meals, until my health gave way."

"Somehow I never realised what I had become. To-day I met Grant—you know what friends we used to be—well—he—he—cut me dead."

There was a sudden, fierce movement at the back of the curtain behind Denny.

The Dean held up his hand.

"Yes," the pitiful voice went on, "it all seemed to have slipped away then, the old ties, the old life, all the hopes ended, like the dinner; I'm looking upon the empty plates at the banquet of life, because I haven't a wedding garment to put on."

"But I wouldn't mind that, if for one moment, before they had left to-night, they could have gathered round me in the old way, just shabby as I am, and had not been ashamed of me; it would have made what is left to bear of the load lighter, if they could have grasped me by the hand, and told me that I wasn't quite a failure, that—that—I'd been handicapped beyond my strength, that I wasn't quite the last of the specials."

"Denny," said the Dean, and his voice was very gentle, "Denny, dear boy, some failures are grander than success."

"What's the use, sir, if they're failures still?"

"And you would have felt happier," said the Dean, "if you could have seen your old schoolfellows again?"

"Yes," said Denny, "but they're gone—all gone—and I must go now," and he shuffled out of the chair towards the door.

Then the Dean gave the signal to the others to come out.

How they crowded round him, and shook his hands and shoulders, and thumped his back until he coughed, as he looked from one to the other in wondering astonishment.

"And," said the editor, "you thought me such a bounder as to be capable of cutting you, simply because you hadn't got a fashionable topper on!"

"Grant," said the Dean, "you asked me to recommend you a sub-editor just now. I think I have found him for you."

"Why, yes, sir. Denny, here is a splendid post waiting for you. Come to my office to-morrow morning," he added, significantly.

The editor forbore to say any more for there was a lump in his throat, and more than one man turned away when they saw the look that came into the dimmed eyes, where the brightness of hope had not shone for such a long time.

The "specials" had learnt a lesson perhaps, when they were behind the Dean's curtains.

Each man knew something had been added to his humanity, and each was silently thankful because a comrade would have his manhood restored to him, and could now add his page to the book of life.

"Denny," said the Dean, "your troubles seem to be clearing away; there is only one thing left for me to do now."

"What is that, sir?" asked Denny.

"To ring for your dinner to be brought up to you; when there is an empty seat at my table I always have dinner kept until my guest arrives."

* * * *

When the butler came, the last thing at night, to switch off the electric light in the dining room, he paused.

The Dean was on his knees praying. With reverent voice he was thanking God for bringing back the last of the "specials."

"It's wonderful," mused Seaton, as he walked to the butler's pantry; "I believe he even prays for me."



THE UNSTAKED GLOBE

WHERE CAN THE LEADING NATIONS INCREASE THEIR
COLONIES AND SPHERES OF INFLUENCE ?

By J. SCOTT KELTIE, LL.D.,

Secretary of the Royal Geographical Society.

AS I write, the Christmas number of the *Buluwayo Chronicle* lies on my table. In a gorgeous cover, it is twice the thickness of the Christmas number of any London weekly. Its handsome pages are adorned with scores of illustrations that would do credit even to the Press of the Mother Country, while the reading is full of local colour and eminently entertaining. All this is the product of a town (it would be a city in America) in which handsome public buildings, great hotels, scientific institutions, and private villas are being reared on a space over which, barely ten years ago, spread the kraal of a savage chief, a "habitation of horrid cruelty," surrounded by impis of bloodthirsty warriors. But "that's all shoved behind" us, and in the short space of ten years the extensive lands terrorised by Lobengula and his warriors are being studded with cities and towns and farms and mining centres; are, in fact, being restored to the wonderful activity and prosperity of which they were the theatre for centuries before and after Kings Solomon and Hiram of Tyre. About a quarter of a century ago expensive expeditions were sent out to explore this then unknown land, which would take months to reach their goal from the Cape; now, by steamer and rail, one may be in Buluwayo in about twenty days from London.

On the other side of the Equator another city is rapidly growing up, with its palaces, its colleges, its palatial hotels, its clubs, its public gardens, where only five years ago the shadow of death and the terror of merciless fanaticism brooded over all the Sudan.

Here are two instances by which we may measure the rate at which the available lands of the globe are being occupied and utilised by Europe and Europe's off-shoot, the United States of America. Twenty-five years

ago Africa was, to a great extent, still a No-Man's Land. Except Algeria; the fringes of the coast occupied by France, England, Portugal and Spain; Cape Colony, Natal, and the Boer Republics; the great neglected continent in its length and breadth was in the hands of the natives. Tripoli and Egypt were, it is true, appendages of Turkey, by courtesy a European Power; Morocco, Tunis, Abyssinia, were native States some removes above the general barbarism of the rest of the Continent. Now Morocco and Abyssinia are the only two patches that remain unattached to a European Power. Great Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, have painted all the rest with their colours, leaving Portugal a mere fraction of her preposterous claims. At present, even if we include Tripoli, from which Turkey is bound to be ousted, as she has been out of Tunis, and for all practical purposes out of Egypt, of the eleven million odd square miles of Africa only some 700,000 square miles remain to be scrambled for; of that 400,000 square miles may be allotted to Tripoli and 200,000 square miles to Morocco. Abyssinia is the only country which international jealousy is likely to keep independent, at least for some time.

From the great scramble, begun less than a quarter of a century ago, Great Britain has emerged with close on three million square miles, even if we exclude Egypt, which is virtually a British Protectorate of about 500,000 square miles (exclusive of the Sudan); France with close on four millions, Germany and Belgium (the Congo Free State) each with a million, Portugal and Spain with a million between them, and Italy with over half-a-million. These are enormous areas; but the biggest areas, as we shall see, are by no means the most valuable estates.

In both aspects little is now left to scramble for, unless some ambitious Power is prepared to enter upon a great war with one or other of its rivals.

But although almost six-sevenths of the lands of the globe have been overlaid with the colours of Powers of European origin or affinities, it by no means follows that they have all been effectively occupied or even completely explored, far less developed as to their resources. Although even Europe has not yet been completely mapped, still it may be left out of account from that point of view. Of Asia extensive regions are even yet practically unexplored. Not only has a large area of Southern Arabia been unvisited by any European, and the rest is but imperfectly known, but much of Tibet proper, and the regions bordering it on the north and north-east, and even the south-east, are practically blank on our maps. Considerable areas to the north-west of Tibet and within the Russian sphere, are most imperfectly known. Indeed, the only thoroughly surveyed countries in Asia, are India and its dependencies, Japan, Siam and certain sections of the Russian sphere, mainly along railway routes. China is roughly mapped, but the gigantic task of surveying it has still to be carried out. Patches here and there in Western Asia have been fairly well mapped, but as a whole the great continent is either unmapped or mapped in only a very rough fashion.

It is even worse with Africa, as might be expected. Great areas are absolutely unexplored, or only crossed by a few travellers' routes. Algeria and Tunis have been or are being surveyed in detail, while a geodetic network covers Cape Colony, and is being carried northwards, though that is of little practical use except as the basis for detailed maps. The Uganda Railway route has been triangulated, and the French are busy surveying Madagascar, while detailed surveys are being carried out on the Nile. Most of the coast line has been accurately laid down. Maps of the whole of Africa are available; some of them are fairly satisfactory as to their main features, but on the whole they are of the roughest character, and based on the crudest materials. Still a vast deal has been done in the last twenty-five years for the exploration of Africa; it is covered by a network of routes, but the wide meshes within that network are still practically untouched. Until the Powers have their

territories thoroughly mapped, it is impossible to form any adequate idea as to their economic capabilities. The Sahara, naturally, has the greatest patches of obscurity on its surface; no doubt much of it is, at present at least, negligible, but its plateaus and ranges—Ahaggar, Tibesti, Asben—and the region within Atlantic influences, deserve careful investigation. Of the Central Sudan States and the Congo Free State interior, we have still much to learn.

North America is being rapidly surveyed in a thoroughly efficient manner, though much of the country in British Columbia and the North-west Territories is still but imperfectly explored, probably about 800,000 square miles. There are great blanks of unknown or little known territory in Mexico and Central America, while South America has as much unexplored (some 2,000,000 square miles) and nearly as much unmapped and imperfectly mapped land as Africa. Exploration in the immense Amazon basin has been mainly along its rivers, and enormous areas of the dense forested areas between the rivers have never been penetrated, at least by white men, and probably not even by natives.

Under the various survey parties sent out by the Governments of Argentina and Chile, the territories of these States are being rapidly mapped and their capabilities ascertained; while the boundary dispute between the two countries has led to a very thorough exploration of the great mountain range that forms their common borderland. But in the other South American Republics—Brazil, Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela—comparatively little has been done to map the country, and this is so even in the three Guianas, the interior of which is an almost unknown land. This, indeed, might be said of all the country lying to the north and north-west of the Amazon right into Eastern Ecuador and Colombia and Southern Venezuela. With the exception of parts of the Argentine and Chile, the mapping of South America as a whole is of the most unsatisfactory kind.

As for Australia, there are still great unvisited blanks in the heart of the continent, but the character of those tracts can be only too readily guessed at. New Zealand as a whole may be said to be well known, and so also south-east New Guinea, the broad western half of which has never been crossed.

It may, then, be said that in Asia, in Africa, in South America, there are immense areas of which our knowledge is of the vaguest character, so vague that we have no clear idea of their physical features, no means of forming an adequate estimate of their capabilities. Even as regards Northern and North-western Canada, we are only beginning to obtain the materials for filling up our maps and estimating its uses to humanity. Of Australia, though so much is unknown, we can form a fair forecast of what is its economical value.

We have thus shown how the lands of the globe have been divided up among those peoples most capable of turning them to the best account, and to what extent our knowledge of those lands is of such a character as to be of practical value. Briefly, let us see what proportion of the lands (including Europe) dominated by the various races is of such a nature as to encourage their direct development by those races themselves, who, it should be noted, all originate in the temperate zone. Of the total area of the British Empire, over 11 million square miles, some 42 per cent. is tropical, though a considerable amount of that is in South Africa, in which the white man may very well become acclimatised; the bulk of the remainder is in Central Africa. Of the French Empire, three-fourths, 75 per cent., is tropical and half desert. Of the German domain some 65 per cent. is tropical. Outside its European possessions, a mere fraction of the whole, Portugal is entirely tropical, and so it is with Belgium. Italy's outside possessions, just about double of the home territory, are entirely tropical. The United States is virtually a temperate country, the extreme south being sub-tropical. Russia's extensive territory is in the temperate zone, except perhaps about a million and a half square miles on the wrong side of the Arctic Circle, while of the remainder a considerable proportion is barren steppe. The oversea possessions of Holland are tropical. It may be said then that of the temperate lands of the globe, those most favourable to the development of human enterprise, a larger proportion is in the hands of people of Germanic type than in those of any other race.

The problem of the possibility of acclimatising peoples of European origin to tropical countries is one of vast importance for the future, and one on which we should

not dogmatise, though at present the obstacles seem insuperable. Still, even in tropical lands like Central Africa, there are considerable areas over 5,000 feet above sea level, where Europeans can lead healthy lives and even rear their children, and from which they can guide the development of the lands below.

But it would be interesting, briefly, to estimate to what extent the lands of the globe have up to the present been economically and commercially developed. Space permits of our doing this only roughly. Various methods might be adopted; one, which we are quite aware is beset with difficulties, and can only be regarded as comparative, is to take the value of the commerce of the various continents as a sort of measure of the extent to which they have been developed. We are quite aware that there is overlapping of figures, but as all are treated alike, we think the method may be taken as, on the whole, a fair one to test comparative economic development. Taking the latest available figures, we find that the commerce of Europe is equivalent to about £830 per annum per square mile of territory; but so densely populated is the continent that it is equivalent to only £8 per head. On the other hand, the commerce of Asia amounts to only £30 per square mile, and 11s. per head of the population. So far as area goes, Africa shows a commerce of only £15 per square mile, but this is equivalent to £1 per head of the population. The commerce of North America shows an average of £68 per square mile per annum, or about £6 10s. per head of the population; while that of Central and South America is only £36 per square mile and £5 per head. Australasia, considering the limited area of land available for development, comes out well with £46 per square mile and over £40 per head of population. Europe, the smallest of all the continents, is far ahead, mainly because its dense population is composed of the dominating and most energetic races of the world; and when North America, with its magnificent resources, is as densely populated as Europe, the result is likely to be, at least, as satisfactory. Nearly one-third of the whole commerce of Asia has been developed under the ægis of British rule in India. Africa, with an area of over eleven million square miles, three times the size of Europe, is, of course, far behind, though in the last twenty years its



"Count Perlitto," I observed, "is the little dark gentleman with the brushed-up moustache?"

"Yes! But it is my father who is most likely to ask you questions. Please don't think that this is a conspiracy, or anything very terrible. I will explain it all to you presently."

With a little smile and a nod she turned away and joined the two men at the other end of the room. I ordered double my usual quantity of wine and began my dinner.

Now, for two evenings I had dined alone at this same little table, which I had carefully chosen because it afforded me the most satisfactory view of the most beautiful girl I had ever seen in my life. She was tall and very slight, her hair was a lightish brown, with here and there a glint of gold, and she had that French trick of laughing with her eyes which I never could resist. She wore delightfully cool muslin gowns, and about her whole person, her jewellery, her shoes, and the care of her hands, there was a certain inexplicable daintiness which was as much a part of her as that delightful little laugh which seemed to me the most musical thing I had ever heard in my life. But to-night things were different. I myself had become an object of the most surprising interest to her two companions. I saw the girl lean forward and talk to them as she trifled with some new and highly-seasoned *hors d'œuvre*, and the effect of her words was instantaneous. Her father fumbled for a moment with an enormous horn-rimmed monocle, having successfully fixed which in his left eye, he turned and transfixed me with a most tremendous stare. The little Italian displayed a similar interest in slightly different fashion. He kept darting sidelong glances towards me, showing his white teeth and curling his black moustache, and all the while talking in most animated fashion to his two companions. This sort of thing went on more or less during the entire progress of the meal, to my great discomfort. No sooner did I raise my eyes to steal one of my customary glances towards the young lady than either the horn monocle with its blank, unwavering stare, or the little Italian's keen black eyes were fixed upon me. Between curiosity and annoyance, my dinner was completely spoilt. I missed a course, and was in the act of rising when I saw the whole party hurriedly leave their places and bear down upon me.

Her father, who only yesterday had responded to some attempted advances on my part with truly British hauteur, stopped at my table and smiled genially upon me.

"If you are taking your coffee outside this evening," he said, "will you join us? This is my friend, Count Perlitto, who is a large landowner in the neighbourhood; my daughter I believe you have already met."

I glanced towards her and found a decided negative engraven upon her frowning forehead. On the whole, though I was burning with curiosity to know what the whole thing meant, I was glad to have an opportunity of asserting my independence.

"I'm very much obliged to you, sir, for the suggestion," I said, "but I'm afraid it's quite impossible. I have a great deal of writing to do to-night, and the mails out here are a trifle scanty."

I distinctly saw the two men exchange rapid glances as I mentioned the writing.

The Count interposed. "The writing. Oh, yes," he said, "but afterwards? The evening is positively too fine to be spent within the doors—beneath the roof—ah, you understand? Besides, you are a tourist, is it not so, from a great country? We would wish, we who live here, to show hospitality to those who come so far from the large cities where all the sightseers find their way. Here it is very different. Here you see the true Italy. You will do us the honour, signor? There is some liqueur, not of the house, which is to be recommended."

Guidance was before me in the frown, now even more forbidding.

"Very sorry, Count," I said firmly. "It is quite impossible for me to join you this evening."

He departed with a polite expression of regret. The girl smiled at me over her shoulder, which I took to mean that so far I had done the correct thing. I sat down in my chair, poured out a glass of wine and tried to puzzle out where I stood. The Count, who was, as I well knew, the great landowner of the place, and whose aversion to tourists was a byword, and who had several times passed me on the road with an insolent stare, was suddenly more than commonly anxious to make my acquaintance. The father of the young lady who had been the object of my respectful, but vehement, admiration, after repulsing my advances in the most freezing manner, was displaying at



I nodded.

"Yes," I said, encouragingly. "The Count looks like the sort who have silver mines to sell. We get plenty of them out in Boston."

"My father thinks he is a good business man," she continued. "As a matter of fact, he has lost nearly all his money speculating in things which he doesn't understand a bit. He has about twenty-thousand pounds left. That is all we have to live upon. The Count is asking twenty-thousand pounds for this mine. If my father buys it we shall be penniless."

"Sure the mine's no good?" I asked.

"Absolutely," she answered, with the first note of impatience in her tone. "Ask yourself what the probabilities are. My father knows nothing about mining himself, and he has not even had an expert's opinion upon it. He goes entirely upon the Count's word, and what the Count chooses to show him. Why, the mine isn't being worked—hasn't been worked for thirty years."

"Perhaps," I suggested, "the Count hasn't the capital to work it. Labour out here's mighty cheap, but up-to-date mining takes a lot of money."

She looked at me with a faint frown. The smile had gone from her lips.

"The mine is worthless," she said, simply. "I am sure of it. I have read up its past history, and if ever there were silver there at all it has been exhausted long ago. But even granted that there is a chance in favour of the mine—which there isn't—I want you to remember that this twenty-thousand pounds is all that stands between us and beggary."

"In that case," I said, decidedly, "your father is mad even to think about the deal."

"I knew," she said, "that you would agree with me. You can understand, can you not, the trouble I am in? My father's mind is practically made up. He means to buy the mine. I saw a telegram to his lawyers, ordering them to realise our last securities. The moment the money comes, my father will sign the deed of purchase."

"Has he no friends?" I asked, "whose opinion he would take?"

"Not one," she answered. "He has always been so foolish that I think everyone is tired of advising him. He always goes his own way in the long run. He is so painfully obstinate. I do not think that there is anybody who can help me—except you."

Her hand fell upon my coat-sleeve, and mine promptly closed over it. She made no movement to draw it away. I felt that I would have pitched the Count down one of his own shafts with pleasure if she had asked me.

"What can I do?" I asked.

"I will tell you," she said. "A plan came into my head when I saw you sitting there alone this evening. Somehow—you looked helpful, and—I had an idea that—you know you have behaved rather badly, haven't you?"

"You mean that I have looked at you a good deal," I answered. "I couldn't help it, Miss Derwent, indeed. It wasn't impertinence. I just felt that I wanted to know you badly, and the next best thing was to sit in my corner and watch you. You are rather nice to watch."

"Am I?" she asked, softly.

"You couldn't give me greater happiness," I said, "than to help you—if, indeed, that is possible. You see, helping implies a reward, doesn't it?"

"You want bribing, then?" she asked, with affected coldness.

"Call it an incentive," I answered. "At least—if it is all I can get—a word of gratitude from you will be worth all the trouble you can give me."

"Is that all—you will expect?" she asked softly.

I felt my heart thumping against my ribs. I wanted to raise her fingers to my lips, and draw her closer to me, and I dared do nothing of the sort. I knew well that she was half playing with me, that she permitted herself this badinage because she had decided rightly or wrongly that I was a person to be trusted.

"If I dared to ask all that I would wish to claim," I said, earnestly, "I am afraid that you would say that my service was not worth the price."

An incomprehensible smile played about her lips. I have often wondered since exactly what she was thinking of at that moment.

"Supposing," she suggested, softly, "that we waive the question of incentive—or reward."

"I will willingly leave it," I said, "to your generosity."

She sighed. Her tone when she spoke again was more practical. I felt that a delightful little interlude was over.



I took her hand again. It was soft and cool, and faintly responsive. I felt that I would have lied till I was black in the face for her. But I wondered——

II.

The Count was first upon the field. He caught me smoking an early cigarette in the cobbled square of the little town, and at once waved his hand in friendly salute.

"Ah!" he cried, as though the sight of me were some unexpected boon conferred upon him by Providence. "It is Mr. Anderson, is it not? Good morning! Good morning!"

"My name," I answered, "is Shrive. John P. Shrive!"

The Count shrugged his shoulders. Suddenly he came close up to my side and looked round to be sure that we were alone.

"Come," he said, "you are an American; you are a people of great affairs; you like, I think, that one talks business with you. Whatever your name may be, you are here to make a report upon my mine—the Great Fortuna Mine. Is it not so?"

"My dear Count," I said, "I guess you are a long way off this time. I know no more about mines than a babe unborn. I'm junior partner and buyer for a firm of dry goods men in Boston, and I'm on my way to Genoa to buy silk. I just stopped over a day or so to get a bit of your country at first hand, and to see your pictures."

The Count listened to me with marked impatience, tapping his leg all the while with his long riding whip. When I had finished he smiled at me serenely.

"Very good, very good, my dear sir. I understand perfectly that it is necessary for you to act secretly. But I will be frank with you. The mine is as good as sold."

I was careful to let an instantly smothered little exclamation of dismay escape me. The Count heard it with a smile of triumph.

"To whom?" I asked.

"To the Englishman, Mr. Derwent," the Count answered promptly. "I am quite open with you—as you see. I cannot treat with your principals, whoever they may be."

"My principals," I answered, "don't buy mines. We deal in dry goods."

"Yes! Yes!" he ejaculated impatiently. "I know all about that. But let us talk like sensible men, eh? The mine being sold, your report is useless, is it not so? Come,

you shall not have your labour for nothing. I will buy it from you."

"If the mine is already sold," I remarked, "of what value can my report be—supposing I have made one?"

"As good as sold," he interrupted. "It is the formalities only which await completion."

"Then I still do not see," I said, "of what value my supposed report could be."

The Count fixed me with his little black eyes.

"For the purposes of a business," he said slowly, "no! It is not worth the paper on which it is written. But I will show you how frank I am. Mr. Derwent, he, too, knows that you are Mr. Anderson, the mining expert. He will come to you for your verdict. He will, perhaps, try to buy your report. Now, you have had no opportunity to inspect the property properly. It may be—I cannot tell—that you have even prepared an unfavourable report. If so I will buy it from you. I do not wish to cause the good Mr. Derwent any uneasiness."

"The uneasiness," I remarked, "will come later on."

"What you mean?" he asked, quickly.

"I know nothing about mines," I said. "I am a dry goods man. But somehow I don't take much stock in the Fortuna Mine."

"For how much you not say that again?" he asked. "Not any more at all. For how much you say it is a good mine?"

The little Count had got there at last. I pursed up my lips and stood as though thinking. The Count watched my face anxiously.

Fortunately for me intervention came in the shape of Mr. Derwent and his daughter, who called to us from the front of the hotel. I could not but admire the ease and grace with which the Count cloaked his annoyance. He took me by the arm and led me across the square, all smiles and bows.

"For how much, dear friend?" he whispered in my ear.

I shook my head.

"You're rushing this a bit, Count," I answered. "I'll think it over."

The Count muttered something which sounded very much like "damn," but was probably something worse. A moment afterwards we were shaking hands with the Derwents.

Miss Derwent, in a broad-brimmed picture hat trimmed with roses, and a white flannel gown, looked more charming than ever. Her greeting, too, with its delicate insinuation of our secret understanding, was exactly what I had looked for. She had talked to me in undertones of the beauty of the place, the clearness of the sky, the wonderful early sunlight in which the distant vine-covered hills were bathed. But of the other things which lay between us she made no mention, nor did she attempt in any way to draw me apart from the others.

Our *déjeuner*—I seemed to be included in the meal as a matter of course—was quite a success. The Count chattered gaily and well of the beauties of the country where, he told us, with a little burst of pardonable pride, his family had ruled for ten centuries. He spoke of art and the things appertaining to it with the ease and fluency of one who was master of his subject. Of his mine, too, he spoke vaguely as the repository of hidden treasures which would long ago have been dragged to light but for his love of the quiet countryside.

"You English," he said, "and you," he added, addressing me, "you do not understand that feeling. It is well for you that you do not. You are a utilitarian people. It is you who work hand-in-hand to-day with the great forces of the world. But with us here it is different. We are guilty of the terrible weakness of leaning upon our past. The people round here are my people. I want to see them husbandmen and wine-growers, not miners with pale faces, sowing the seeds of weakness in the next generation. I love to see my hillsides covered with vineyards as they have ever been. I do not love the tall shafts, the roar of machinery, the country made black and scarred with the entrails torn out of the earth. And yet these things must come," he murmured, leaning back and lighting a cigarette. "For many years I have struggled against it, but no longer. Ah, it is not possible."

I looked across at the Count with unfeigned admiration. His beautiful eyes were filled with sadness. He leaned back in his chair, looking out upon the distant hillside as though already those shafts had come into existence. Miss Derwent permitted herself the faintest of smiles as she glanced across at me. Mr. Derwent seemed intent upon the great dish of strawberries which the Count had sent down from his own villa.

After breakfast we were served with coffee and some delicate green liqueur, and then Mr. Derwent took his hand in the game. He began by moving his chair close to mine, and making clumsy efforts to get rid of the Count and his daughter. At this sort of game the Count was his master, and with very faint help from Veronica (I knew her name now), his attempts for some time were unsuccessful. At last, however, in obedience, as I suspect, to a vigorous under-the-table injunction from her father, Veronica rose languidly to her feet.

"I am afraid," she said, "that I am in an extravagant frame of mind this morning. After all, I think that I must have that ivory cross. Count, will you come and interpret for me?"

The Count rose to his feet with much less than his usual gallantry.

"Will you not charge me with the commission, signorina," he said. "My shop-people, when they see an English lady or an American, are, I fear, inclined to be exorbitant. Leave it to me, and I will promise you the cross at much less cost."

Veronica hesitated. Mr. Derwent interposed.

"Nonsense, my dear!" he exclaimed. "I have seen the cross, and I think the price very reasonable. Go with the Count at once and secure it. I insist! It is only fair that we should spend a little money in a town where we have been so well entertained."

Veronica lifted her white skirts just far enough to show me a delightful little foot, and turned towards the Count. It was not possible for him to hesitate any longer. He made a vigorous effort, however, to include me in the party.

"You, too, Mr. Anderson," he said, passing his arm through mine. "Oh, I insist. There are, indeed, some veritable curios to be seen. It is an opportunity which you must not miss."

I am convinced that Mr. Derwent would have detained me by main force had I not saved him the trouble. I rose from my chair as Veronica passed, but excused myself with some emphasis.

"Sorry, Count," I said, "but I'm afraid I'm very unlike most of my countrypeople in that respect. I've no use for curios. I like my ornaments and my furniture clean and modern. I'll keep Mr. Derwent company."

The Count threw me a look over his shoulder, evidently intended to remind me of our uncompleted bargain. Veronica

noded to me from underneath her parasol, and crossed the square at a pace which the Count must have found maddeningly slow. Mr. Derwent leaned over towards me and opened the ball straight off.

III.

"I—er—was hoping to have a few minutes' conversation with you this morning, Mr. Anderson," he said, slowly adjusting his eye-glass. "From something which my daughter let drop in—er—the course of conversation, I gathered that you were to some extent interested in—in short, in mining properties."

"You wanted to ask me," I suggested, "about this mine of the Count's?"

"Exactly!" he admitted. "Now I am free to confess that I am not a mining expert. I came out to have a look at the property, meaning—er—to have an independent opinion in case I thought it likely to interest me. I find, however, that there is no room for any delay in the matter. Our good friend the Count—very decent, hospitable sort of fellow he seems—is, between ourselves, hard pressed. He means to sell, and to sell at once. He says that his brother is even now in London with a power of attorney. However that may be, it is certain that I have no time to get an expert out. I must rely upon my own judgment and the Count's honesty."

"Of the two——" I murmured.

"Eh?" Mr. Derwent interrupted.

I stirred my coffee vigorously and disclaimed speech. Mr. Derwent glared at me from behind his monocle.

"It occurred to me," he went on, "that you might in this dilemma be inclined to help me with a word of advice. I am aware," he went on with a little wave of the hand, "that such a course is a little unusual. I refrain from asking you any personal questions. What your position here may be I do not know. I do not enquire. It is not my business. You may be—er—representing other interests. I will take my risk of that. I have ventured to make out this cheque for one hundred guineas"; he pushed it towards me. "Consider me for the moment as a client. Is the Great Fortuna Mine worth twenty-thousand pounds?"

I tore the cheque into small pieces. "It is not worth twenty-thousand pence," I answered.

He suddenly dropped his eye-glass and leaned forward. I scarcely knew him. A certain vagueness of expression was gone. He spoke and looked like a wide-awake, astute man.

"Come," he said, "I don't like your tearing that cheque up. You could have given me value for the money, and no man should be ashamed to take what he has earned."

"No man," I answered, "can serve two masters. That's a mighty true saying, Mr. Derwent."

"There's only one thing I'm afraid of about you," he said, eyeing me keenly. "I can't be altogether sure that Veronica hasn't been getting at you."

"Do you allude," I asked guardedly, "to your daughter?"

He ignored my question, but I could see that his suspicions were growing.

"For some reason or other," he remarked thoughtfully, "Veronica is dead set against this deal. I never knew her interfere in a business matter before. I can't understand it at all."

"Your daughter," I said gravely, "may surely be pardoned if she takes some interest in a matter concerning her so closely."

"But for the life of me," he protested, "I cannot see how it does concern her."

"Speculations such as this," I said severely, "may be the pastime of the rich; but to gamble with the shreds of one's fortune is unpardonable."

He looked at me in amazement.

"You—I—but you must be acquainted with my daughter, I suppose. You must have some idea of what you are talking about?"

"Naturally," I answered tersely.

"Then upon my word, for an intelligent young man," he said, "you're about the best hand at talking nonsense I've come across."

"You ought to be a judge," I answered. "However, for your daughter's sake, here's the best and safest tip you've ever had. Let the mine alone."

"I'm inclined to think you're right," he admitted with a sigh. "It is a risk, especially if your people, whoever they may be, are 'bears.' I hate to come all this way and do no business, though."

"Why don't you stay at home, then," I said, severely, "and for your daughter's sake put the little you have in good railroad stock?"

He set down the liqueur glass which he had been in the act of raising to his lips, and looked at me for a moment in utter astonishment. Then he leaned back in his chair and laughed till the tears came into his eyes.

"I don't know who you are," he said weakly, "but you're the funniest young man I ever came across. Never mind. I believe you're right about the mine. We'll start back to London this morning."

I was perhaps as astonished as he was, but I said nothing, for the Count and Veronica were close at hand. The former looked at us both anxiously.

"Come," he called out, "we have triumphed. The ivory cross is ours. And now, if you are ready, Mr. Derwent, my carriage is here. The notary will be at my villa in an hour's time."

Mr. Derwent rose to his feet.

"One moment, Count," he said.

They stepped aside. Veronica turned to me. There was the most becoming little pink flush upon her cheek.

"Well?" she exclaimed.

"I think that your father is persuaded," I said. "He will not buy. He is telling the Count so now."

She laughed softly.

"My friend," she said, "I shall be for ever in your debt."

"I would rather," I answered, "that you paid."

She looked at me and down at her feet.

"He would have signed last night," she said, "if I had not invented you."

The Count and Mr. Derwent came towards us. The former was pale with rage. I am convinced that nothing but the arrival of a telegraph messenger at that instant prevented his assaulting me. He tore open his message, and as he read he became a changed man.

"Alas!" he exclaimed, turning towards Mr. Derwent with ill-concealed triumph, "I can no longer argue this matter with you. Your time was up last night. You have exceeded it, and, behold, the mine is no longer mine to deal with. It is sold."

Mr. Derwent looked sharply at me.

"Sold to whom?" he asked.

The Count shrugged his shoulders.

"It is my brother in London who has arranged the matter," he said. "He has power of attorney, and he has received the money. The purchaser is a Mr. Charles Ellicot."

Mr. Derwent looked at his daughter.

"What do you know about this, Veronica?" he asked.

"Tell you presently, father," she answered.

"Just at present I want to talk to Mr. Anderson. Please come here."

I followed her obediently round the hotel to the gardens in the rear. She made me sit down, and took the seat next to mine. As though afraid that I might seek to escape, she laid her hand upon mine. It was not necessary.

"First of all," she began, boldly, "I'm engaged to Charlie."

I held her hand tightly. I was not capable of articulate speech just then.

"Father wouldn't hear of it," she went on. "He said that Charlie was too poor, and had never done anything. He didn't believe in Charlie. I did."

She paused. I think she found my silence a little disconcerting.

"Charlie heard of this mine," she went on. "He sent over two experts and got two magnificent reports. Then he set about trying to raise the money to buy it. Unfortunately, father heard about the mine too, and he decided to come over and look at it. I came with him to try to stop his buying it, if I could. All the time Charlie was trying to raise the money in London. Yesterday he wired me, 'All promised. Shall conclude to-morrow.' I was almost at my wit's end, for father had arranged to conclude the purchase last night."

"This is where I come in, I suppose," I remarked feebly.

She nodded.

"They really put the idea into my head," she said. "My father wondered whether you were not here in connection with the mine, and the Count looked mysterious and smiled to himself. So I spoke to you last night, and afterwards I told them that you were a mining-engineer. That put father off at once, for he saw a chance of getting an expert opinion."

"He had it," I murmured.

"It was awfully sweet of you," she declared. "You see how beautifully it has all come off!"

"Then it wasn't your father's last twenty-thousand pounds!" I remarked, suddenly.

"Of course not," she murmured. "My father is really Lord Derwent. He prefers to travel incognito because people bother him so."



For a moment the humour of this thing possessed me. I recalled my sound advice to a multi-millionaire, and I laughed till the tears stood in my eyes. Suddenly I remembered that I, too, had a confession to make.

"By-the-by," I said slowly, "did you say that your—your friend ——"

"Charlie," she murmured.

"Had had two favourable reports on the mine?"

"Yes."

"And has bought it?"

She nodded. I looked at her sympathetically. After all, it was impossible for her to marry a pauper.

"I am very sorry to hear it," I said, hypocritically. "Perhaps the most extraordinary part of this affair is that I am really a mining engineer, and have been preparing a secret report upon this property."

She looked at me in amazement.

"Are you in earnest?" she asked.

"I am sorry to say I am," I answered. "I came over on behalf of a New York syndicate, and I posted my report to them last night. I told your father the literal truth. The Great Fortuna Mine is not worth twenty thousand pence."

"What a fraud the Count is," she sighed, "and what a lot of money people will lose."

"Yes, but Charlie!"

She laughed softly.

"Oh, it makes no difference to Charlie," she said. "I believe he had to pay an awful lot of money for those favourable reports, but he's sold out to a syndicate for a hundred-thousand pounds. He got the signatories and raised the money of them to buy the mine. The syndicate will sell to a company, and, of course, the public who

buy shares will be the people who will lose their money. I think Charlie's quite clever, don't you?"

"I should imagine there's no doubt about it," I assured her.

We sat for a few moments in silence. Our hands were still very close together. I was feeling exceedingly depressed.

"We spoke," I remarked, "of something in the nature of a reward."

"It is quite true," she admitted. "You have earned it. Please sit still."

She rose to her feet and bent over me.

"Close your eyes," she whispered.

I obeyed her. To this moment I can remember the touch of the sun upon my shut eyelids, the rustling of the soft, lazy air through the orange trees, the drowsy humming of bees in the garden. I felt her face close to mine—and suddenly the touch of her lips, one whispered word in my ear! I had had my reward.

For a second I remained there, motionless. I lacked the power or the will to tear myself away. Then with a little cry I sprang to my feet and hurried round the corner of the hotel. I was too late. The hotel omnibus, laden with luggage, was rumbling across the square, the Count stood upon the pavement waving a florid farewell. A little white hand flashed out of the window. It was the last I ever saw of Veronica.

* * *

But one morning, some two months later, I received a packet in an unfamiliar handwriting. When I opened it I found one hundred shares in the Great Fortuna Silver Mine, and a little scrawl of paper:

"Charlie says these are very good to sell—quickly!"













present must vote, no one can vote for himself, a two-thirds majority is necessary for an election, and the voting must be absolutely secret.

It is to secure the last of these conditions that a very ingenious voting paper has been adopted. It is divided into three compartments, in the first of which the cardinal writes his own name, in the second that of the candidate for whom he votes, and in the third a motto and number.

The first and third compartments are then folded twice and sealed down at both sides, so that only the middle compartment can be seen by the scrutineers. The back of the voting paper, behind the spaces for the name and motto of the voter, is covered with fancy printing that the writing may not show through.

Although the instructions for filling in, folding and sealing these voting papers are most clear and precise, a surprising number of mistakes sometimes occur. At the Conclave that elected Leo XIII., several papers in the first scrutiny were rejected because improperly sealed; in the second scrutiny one of them was utterly illegible; and in the third one of the electors was found to have voted for Cardinal Nobody!

At each assembly of the Conclave, three Cardinals are elected as scrutineers, and three as infirmarians. The duty of the latter is to take the votes of any of the Cardinals who may be confined to their cells through sickness.

In voting, the electors in order of seniority go to the altar, where each kneels for a few moments in private prayer. He then rises and holds his voting paper over a large chalice which stands on the altar, and audibly takes oath that he is voting for the man he sincerely believes to be the most suitable; after which he places the paper on the paten and lets it slide into the chalice.

The next business is to count the votes. The chalice is shaken to mix the papers, which are then counted into a second chalice, in order to see if they correspond in number with the Cardinals present. If they do not, they are burnt, and a fresh vote taken.

Each voting paper is taken from the chalice by the first scrutineer, who looks at the name voted for and hands the paper to the second scrutineer, who, after looking at it, gives it to the third, who reads the name aloud. All the Cardinals then make a mark against that name on their lists.

When all the votes have been read out, the papers are pierced and threaded on a string. If no one has obtained the necessary

two-thirds majority, a second vote is taken, which is known as that of Accession. This is done in order that, if any candidate has received a large number of votes, any Cardinals who please may transfer their votes to him, and so bring about an election without further delay. No one can vote again for the same person, but each is obliged to hand in a voting paper, though he need not insert anyone's name in it.

The votes thus acceded are now added to those previously given, and if no candidate has secured the necessary majority, the papers are mixed with some damp straw and burnt in a small stove, placed in the chapel for this purpose. The appearance of smoke from the flue is the signal to the people outside that the Pope is not yet elected.

When, either by Scrutiny or Accession, it appears that someone has received a two-thirds majority of the votes, the papers are re-counted, and in various ways examined to see that everything is in order. Should the majority be exactly two-thirds of the total votes recorded, the papers are opened and the names of those voting in the majority examined, in order to make sure that the elected Cardinal did not vote for himself.

If all is proved correct, three Cardinals are chosen by lot to act as revisers, and these re-count and check the voting papers. When they certify that the Pope is elected, the papers are burnt, but without any damp straw.

The Secretary of the Conclave and the Master of Ceremonies are now summoned, and the Dean proceeds with them to the throne of the newly-elected Pope, and asks if he is willing to accept the office. Should he consent, the canopies over all the thrones but his own are at once lowered, in token that the temporary joint sovereignty of the Sacred College is at an end.

The new Pope now proceeds to the altar and, after spending a short time in prayer, is conducted to a vestry, where he assumes the usual papal dress, after which he returns to the altar and receives the homage of the Cardinals. This is sometimes known as the "adoration," and the absurd notion has gone abroad that divine worship is paid to the Pope. It need hardly be added that this is utterly untrue.

Later, the election is announced from the balcony of St. Peter's by the Senior Cardinal Deacon, and the new Pope's first public act is to give the Apostolic Benediction to the city and the world from the loggia of the cathedral.

MAGNIFICENT MISS MEDWAY.

A LONG, COMPLETE STORY.

By CHARLES EDWARDS.

Illustrated by F. PEGRAM.

I.

JOHN DOLLINGTON BAGSHAW, otherwise Jack Bagshawe, was copying the draft of a moderately-important treaty with a foreign Power, when the porter brought up his uncle's visiting-card. To tell the candid truth, he was not thinking deeply of what he was writing. His mind was engaged with the magnificent Miss Medway, as some called her. He had little doubt that he was in love seriously for the first time in his life, and he believed that Christine Medway was not toying with him on purpose to hang his scalp in the cabinet where she might be supposed to keep such triumphant relics.

The porter stood deferentially, cap in hand, while the F.O. clerk finished a word.

"The young gentleman," he then said, "will not mind waiting, I was to say. He does not want to hurry you, sir, if you are busy."

"Really! How good of him! All right, Bathurst; say I'll be down directly."

The F.O. clerk dropped an ink-blot on his uncle's visiting-card. He also laughed airily, peeped into a little ivory hand-mirror which lay on a tin box inscribed "Japan," and gave his slender moustache a twirl. And then he put the mirror down with a slap. It was just habit that had made him cast an eye upon the thing; and the idea of associating that chubby-cheeked young ruffian at the bottom of the stairs with the requirements of such harmless vanity was too ridiculous. If it had been Sir Horace and Lady Courtly, the case would have been different. The Courtleys were uncle and aunt to the magnificent Miss Medway, and had once called at the F.O. about something or other.

The F.O. clerk's own uncle was standing on the mat in a disjointed attitude. His back was towards the stairs. To his nephew he seemed a preposterous agglomeration of flesh and bones. His frock-coat and tall hat

were only too obviously a forced concession to the needs of his present neighbourhood. They didn't suit him, though they did put a clumsy year or two on to his age. Jack Bagshawe noticed this when his uncle jerked round like a marionette in response to the severe little cough with which he announced his coming.

Then the chubby cheeks, mouth to match, dimpled chin, and greenish eyes of the eighteen-year-old uncle all conspired to effect a genial smile; and the uncle himself extended a huge paw to be shaken. He also charged forth an apology.

"I'm awfully sorry, old chap, to disturb you! I am, indeed! But it's so deuced particular, you know. I thought you wouldn't mind; and I was precious lucky to get leave to run up because old Gran Haverton's down with pneumonia. I hope you don't mind?"

The F.O. clerk mounted his eye-glass.

"How are you?" he said, when he had had enough of his uncle's red and quite moist paw. "We'd better go to the 'Quicksands,' I think."

He was too much of a diplomatist already to show the tail of a personal emotion of any serious nature to the world at large, including his uncle; but it took him all his time for a moment or two to restrain his impulse to mock at his young relative. The lad was in some respects enviable, but he was no beauty. His lavender-coloured trousers and poppy-red tie were astonishing; they alone were calculated to give his grandmother an ailment, if she lacked one. The nephew grasped the incongruous whole of him at a glance, and suggested the "Quicksands." The "Quicksands" was a club of such monumental slowness and gravity that laughter heard in its stately halls was generally of the belated kind. It took the majority of the "Quicksanders" from ten

minutes to one day to appreciate a humorous remark or situation. That would suit Jack Bagshawe very well, considering. A hansom was summoned, and uncle and nephew were soon rattling up Parliament Street.

"Been fighting?" asked Jack Bagshawe, when he had lit a cigarette.

"Fighting? Of course not!" replied the boy earnestly. "I—it's ever so much more important than that! And, I say, Jack, old chap, you don't mind my not looking you up last week-end, do you? I was so beastly busy, you know, at old Gran's. She wanted me there, you know."

He paused and fumbled at the fluff on his upper lip, which hinted downily at the eighteen full-fed years of his life to date.

"Get on!" said the F.O. clerk.

"Do you mean me or the horse, old chap?" asked the boy, almost as if he were nervous.

"Both. Is she very——"

The uncle interrupted him with the impetuosity of a hailstorm in May.

"Jack," he cried, linking his red paws, "she's too lovely for anything! I never in all my life felt as I did when she smiled at me—on me, that is—and called me 'John' last Monday. She knows you—by sight, anyway—and that's one reason, you know, why I made up my mind to cut up and see you about it. She gave my fingers such a squeeze when we—er—parted."

The F.O. clerk whisked out his white silk handkerchief and wiped his eyes with it.

"I was enquiring about your grandmother," he said afterwards, as sweetly as if he were coaxing a Continental Power to make a fool of itself. "Well?"

The boy blushed purple. Blushes in him assumed that alarming hue. They told all intelligent observers about the bodily discomforts prepared for him and his offspring in the future by a long line of self-indulgent ancestors.

"Oh, yes, I know!" he murmured. "She isn't all that bad, really!"

"Then I take it," exclaimed the F.O. clerk to his uncle, "that you are here on false pretences. Doesn't it strike you that using your aged relative as a pretext for a little change in town is more or less unworthy of a Bagshawe? I'm presuming, of course, that you don't mean a solid word about your condition as—well, ahem!—consequent upon that particular squeezing of your fingers. They'd stand a lot of squeezing without crying, wouldn't they, those fingers?"

His eye-glass stared brutally at his uncle's hands, which were knotted together on his knees in a convulsive manner.

It was not the reference to his red paws that hurt the uncle, but the stab at his honour. He pouted as if the blow had struck him right over the heart.

"I think I won't say anything more about it just yet," he said. "You're frightfully rough on a fellow. Annie—your mother, you know—says you always were the most sarcastic chap that could be, even when you were——"

The F.O. clerk raised a hand. It was a white hand, small, with filbert-shaped nails.

"That'll do!" he said imperatively. "I'm not borrowing these minutes from the nation for the pleasure of hearing an analysis of my own character. You're quite at liberty to withhold your confession, or whatever you please to call it or think it, until after luncheon. Perhaps by that time there'll be none to make. I'm sure I hope so, for both sakes."

He fluttered his fingers towards an acquaintance in Pall Mall, smiled, nodded, and puffed smoke. The uncle fell back heavily. He looked as if he had just been bowled first ball in the Eton-Harrow cricket match. His lower jaw slacked down, and his large pendulous nose—a Haverton inheritance of doubtful value—seemed to quiver to its extremity, as it also tried to share in the general depression of its comrade features. His eyes were like a codfish's—a codfish's on a pier-head after five minutes in a boat. But the nephew paid no further heed to him in the vehicle. He was thinking again of the magnificent Miss Medway, and what her love and companionship for life might mean to him. His thoughts travelled fast. It was simple for them to get switched on to a line in which they had much in common with the foolish lump whose right elbow was touching him. And then he was almost in the humour to grind his teeth melodramatically, as often before. For it was just this John Bagshawe the first, or second, according to your standpoint, who was set between him and a mundane—that is, a monetary—position which would have placed him instantly level with Christine in the matrimonial market. This late-born uncle of his, by his grandfather's second wife; and no one else.

A somewhat remarkable lot the Bagshawes of Springhill! They had for generations been notorious at marrying. Take, for

example, the F.O. clerk's own mother, the actual baronet's eldest child. Like all the Bagshawe girls, save one, for the last century, she had found a husband ere she was twenty—at seventeen, to be exact. Her father had determined to put an end to such precocious nonsense, and had penned her up in quite a scandalous way. Result: at seventeen she wedded her cousin, Wellesley Bagshawe, the curate and prospective rector of Springhill; ran off with him and did it, and after a fortnight the pair returned in the old-fashioned way and threw themselves at Sir John's feet, already gouty, also in the old-fashioned way.

were such a mellow company in its solemn precincts, and most of them moved about it with their hands behind their backs, breathing faint and polished execrations when anything like a carpet or a chair-leg interfered with the freedom of their slow locomotion. They made straight for the dining-room. It was early, and the lunchers were few. All venerable, moreover. About three pairs of bushy grey eyebrows twitched in response to the F.O. clerk's polite comprehensive bow.

The uncle was a screaming discord in such an environment. He made matters worse



"For heaven's sake, my lad," said the nephew, "remember that you're not on a race-course! No one's shouting the odds here."

Sir John forgave them, but took his revenge by-and-by in a second wife—a Haverton—with large nose and means.

The raw monstrosity accompanying the F.O. clerk in the hansom was the outcome of this vengeance—he and a pale slip of a girl named Jennie, who even at fifteen was looking at unmarried men with the eyes of a huntress. Their arrival at the shining granite pillars of the "Quicksands" portico broke these visions. Jack Bagshawe went up the stately steps with his hands behind him, grave far beyond his years. He always felt like that in the atmosphere of the "Quicksands." They

by promptly knocking over and smashing a champagne glass on the table at which he sat. Waiters and "Quicksanders" turned to look at him after the catastrophe as if he were an earthquake. And that made matters worse still for him. Nevertheless, under his nephew's condescending yet humane persuasion he ate a very hearty meal, refusing nothing indeed that was suggested, from olives to toothquill. Only when forty-five minutes by the dining-room clock had sped did the F.O. clerk refer to the special mission of his uncle.

"Well," he then said quietly, "now that we're through with this business, what is it

you want to tell me? I thought they kept you too much in hand at the place on the hill for premature frivolities *a deux*, so to speak?"

He had to translate this into plainer words ere he got an answer. Then, purple again to the dimple in his chin, the uncle flew to justify himself.

"I hope," he said, so loud that several newcomers heard him, and paused, fork and spoon in hand, "I hope I'm not brute enough to trifle with any girl's affections. Still, you know——"

"For heaven's sake, my lad," said the nephew, in a low and strenuous tone, "remember that you're not on a race-course! No one's shouting the odds here. Drive on!"

The uncle tried to atone to the disturbed old gentlemen by looking towards them in full panoply of his penitent purple. But he soon gave that up. They were an awful sight. They sent his courage below the belt.

"All right, Doll, old chap!" he whispered. "A fellow must live his life, you know!"

"I don't happen to know," snapped the nephew icily; "and I hate that habit of iterating 'you know' without rhyme or reason. It palls fearfully. It's the most unendurable clap-trap outside the playground. Well?"

The uncle hesitated, and knocked down another wine-glass, fortunately without breaking it. This merciful escape encouraged him afresh.

"I know you don't happen to know, Doll," he continued. "I was just coming to it. A chap must marry some day. Everyone knows that," he sniggered pathetically; "especially a fellow who's a Bagshawe and a Haverton. There's never been one of the direct males on the Haverton side, you know, since Cromwell's time who didn't do it when his time came. As for the Bagshawes, I expect you know what chaps they are better than I can tell you. A fellow must, Doll!"

The F.O. clerk aged ten years during this speech.

"We'll take that as read, marked and digested," he said when his uncle stopped, as if for a comment. "I should feel rather thankful if you'd get to the pith of your yarn. So far it's all rind."

"Oh, hang it, Doll, it's so beastly difficult!" exclaimed the uncle, with fervour. "It's miles worse than an exam. It's like getting a decent lead in a race, and then

feeling the other fellow—the only other who matters, you know—feeling he's creeping up and catching you."

The nephew would have made a fine study for an artist in quest of a type of the haughty young Englishman whose demeanour suggests that he was sent into the world to excite the antipathy of everyone except his mother, his sisters, and a few other women. He did not know it, but that is how he looked, inevitably now. That he of all men, with magnificent Miss Medway queening it perplexingly in his own heart and mind, should be condemned to such a rabid confidence as this!

"Do spare me your pretty little analogies, John!" he said with an heroic determination to be patient for a short spell longer.

"All right; I will then. I am in love—real love; and that's the real truth," said the uncle desperately.

The nephew sounded a breath which might have travelled right from his boots, for the noise it made and the time it took clearing him. His uncle stopped abruptly and focussed him anxiously with his greenish eyes. Dilated, as now, those greenish eyes of young John Bagshawe were as bad as a nightmare visitation to the F.O. clerk.

"What's the row, Doll?" murmured the uncle, in a tone that suited his expression.

"Nothing. I've got to get back to Downing Street, if you've quite finished luncheon; that's all," replied the nephew. Heaven alive! That he, with his own psychological problems fuming in him, should be thus used as a sort of dustbin for the half-baked emotions of this idiotic school-boy uncle of his, in his fifth or sixth calfish, amorous entanglement! He had no doubt it was an entanglement; probably with the kitchenmaid of his house-master—an entanglement without words, so to say; the absurdest kind of all.

The uncle slowly produced a caramel from the watch-pocket of his waistcoat. It had stuck to the case of his watch; but he didn't seem to mind. He peeled it and thrust it into his mouth. His attitude towards life's most charming mystery seemed suddenly changed.

"Hope you don't object, Doll, old chap?" he said genially. "I shove 'em down at all hours. It won't trouble my digestion, you can bet. Sha'n't offer you one, though, for reasons of State, and all that. He, he, he! And, look here, I'm not going to bother you

about her any more. I'm off to the Zoo. Gran Haverton 'll keep till the evening, I expect, all right."

It was on the nephew's lips to cry, "You can't do better, blockhead that you are! You'll find several appendaged relatives there." But he restrained the ungenerous impulse. He smiled instead, as he rose, and laid a hand on his uncle's shoulder.

"My boy," he said, "when you are a few years older, like me, you'll learn to keep to your own side of the pavement. Women are all very well; but it's men that one has to do with. Women are too distracting. It gives other men too much of a pull over you if you—er—yield to the glamour of their—er—fascinations, don't you know. I'd wait until I'd enjoyed a steady year or two at Oxford, and worked off some of my fat, if I were you, before I proposed to any of them. I don't suppose you're lunatic enough to have gone as far as that; but, since you want my opinion, there it is. What do you say now to a Chartreuse as 'good-bye'? It would go fairly well with that putty stuff in your mouth."

"Thanks!" he said coldly. "That is—no, thanks! I don't want it. And I hate sarcasm, and that kind of thing—simply hate it!" He warmed afresh, and was his earlier self again. "Of course they're distracting, Doll!" he added almost plaintively. "Every chap knows that. But how's a fellow to help it? He didn't make 'em. I'm not an old icicle, like you: You'll never marry, of course! Anyone can see that. But, dash it all! I hope, some day, long before you're British Ambassador in Paris, and all that, you'll be doing the square thing, and standing godfather to one or two of my——"

The nephew shivered and beckoned to the waiter. The gleaming mirth in his uncle's greenish eyes was the last straw to his endurance.

"How much?" he inquired. And then he turned fiercely upon his uncle. "You're enough to make any man's luncheon disagree with him; I'll be shot if you're not!" he said tersely.

The waiter kept a sphinx-like countenance.

The uncle moved aside, and began to hum "Dolly Grey" music, viewing the other diners while he hummed. A Cabinet Minister was now present, and two Privy Councillors. The boy beamed resolutely on them all. For the time, at any rate, he felt at peace with the world and himself. He

was comfortable in body, and his mind rejoiced in one of its momentary vacuous fits, which left it like a pure white sheet for the gaiety and scenic beauty of life to reflect themselves upon. He waited for the chink of interchanging cash to end, and then preceded his nephew towards the corridor. The words "Good-bye, Dolly," etc., were audible at quite five yards' distance from him. To the F.O. clerk they were an insulting personal communication; but he bore this valorously, for the sake of the compensation of seeing the last of his oafish uncle in a minute or two. Indeed, so keen was his belief in the prospect, that he volunteered a further token of hospitality as he prepared to return to Downing Street.

"See here, John!" he said. "You've amused me a good deal, and though I'm not much wiser about your mess than I was, we'll take it for granted that you're cured, as I hope you are. On your way to the Zoo, you'll be passing my rooms. If you want a rest, a temperance drink, or anything of that sort, drop in. Withers will see to you. I dare say I'll be there myself about six, to dress and so on. May see you again, therefore."

"Thanks, awfully, Doll!" he said, grateful to the point of effervescence.

He offered his nephew his red paw, to show how grateful he was.

But the F.O. clerk had had enough of the red paw, and every other part of his uncle, for the time being. He waved a "Farewell!" and smiled a "So long then!" instead.

II.

The uncle was left on the "Quicksands" steps. He did not stay there. He soon realised the bleakness of his position, with tremendous old personages slowly climbing or slowly descending the well-graduated stairs to luxurious ease. He understood better than before that he had not a thing or thought in common with the members of the "Quicksands" Club, now that his nephew Doll had abandoned him. It was about half-an-hour later that he found himself pretty close to the mass of lofty buildings known as Dagmar Mansions, a flat of which his nephew honoured by residing in it. He would have sworn before the Lord Chancellor that it was an accident which had brought him thither—sworn truthfully, too. He had gazed in shop windows—not at all at his own reflection, which, in fact, annoyed him

—and hummed a multitude of popular airs, and been content to steer vaguely towards the great north-west where the Zoo lay. And he had become thirsty.

Solely in the interests of his thirst, he made for the F.O. clerk's quarters. It never for one moment occurred to him that because he had written a laborious and worshipful epistle to his fair one, informing her that he was coming to town again, and would be seeing his nephew Doll, she might take an active interest in his movements. He hoped he knew women—especially such a woman—better than that. Doll was right—they were distracting, the more so that the traditions of life, and so on, left all the tiresome, progressive stages of a courtship to the man. At least, they ought. In her case they would, of course. He was hail-fellow-well-met with Withers on the instant.

"How are you?" he cried, when that clean-shaven gentleman came eye to eye with him. "I've only looked in for a drink and a cigarette."

Withers had not the least objection. Quite the contrary, indeed. He respected his master's uncle as he would have respected any young gentleman, however peculiar, who was the heir to a baronetcy and about fifty thousand a year. He had more than once thought of young John Bagshawe as a future master. It seemed to him that he could live even smoother and more profitable days with his master's uncle than he lived even at present. One never knew. Things were always happening, and the F.O. clerk was often distressingly short of ready money. He smiled upon the boy as he would not have ventured to smile upon his master.

"What shall it be, sir?" he asked.

"That's a stumper!" said the uncle thoughtfully.

He let his eyes rove for an inspiration. They were as keen as a cat's, and were not long in seeing all the details within easy range of them. He was quite near to the mantelpiece. There were many cards of invitation stuck about the Louis Quinze mirror; letters, too—and one letter in particular. His eyes widened as they fixed upon that one letter in particular. Could it be? Yes. Great Sophocles! It was. And addressed in that delicate, yet far from weak, handwriting of which he had already secured a sample! He carried that sample in his waistcoat pocket. He had decided from the moment of securing it that he

would never part with it, alive or dead. If Doll had been a little more sympathetic just now, he would have produced that scrap of paper, as one other witness to the reasonableness of his passion. But Doll had been disappointing, and he had not been stimulated even to remember the trophy which reposed so near his heart as a talisman, and something more.

"A long drink or a short one, sir?" asked the gracious Withers.

"Get me a long drink, Withers, please. Something with lemon in it and lots of sugar, you know. And, I say, you needn't hurry about it!"

This was artful. Would the man see through him?

The boy asked himself the question excitedly as he looked Withers in the face, with all his powers of dissimulation at full spread.

But Withers seemed to see nothing except his duty, which was plainly also a pleasure to him.

"Very good, sir," he said. "I'll be as quick as I possibly can."

"Don't spoil it by hurrying," urged the boy, dashingly this time, even with much of the gaiety of air which sits with such comeliness on the individuality of the accomplished man about town.

Withers said, "Very good, sir!" once more, and closed the door behind him. Even Gran Haverton's maid, when the old lady was down with an indisposition—pale-rose upholstery all about the bed—even she could not have shut a door with more scrupulous care for its locks and hinges.

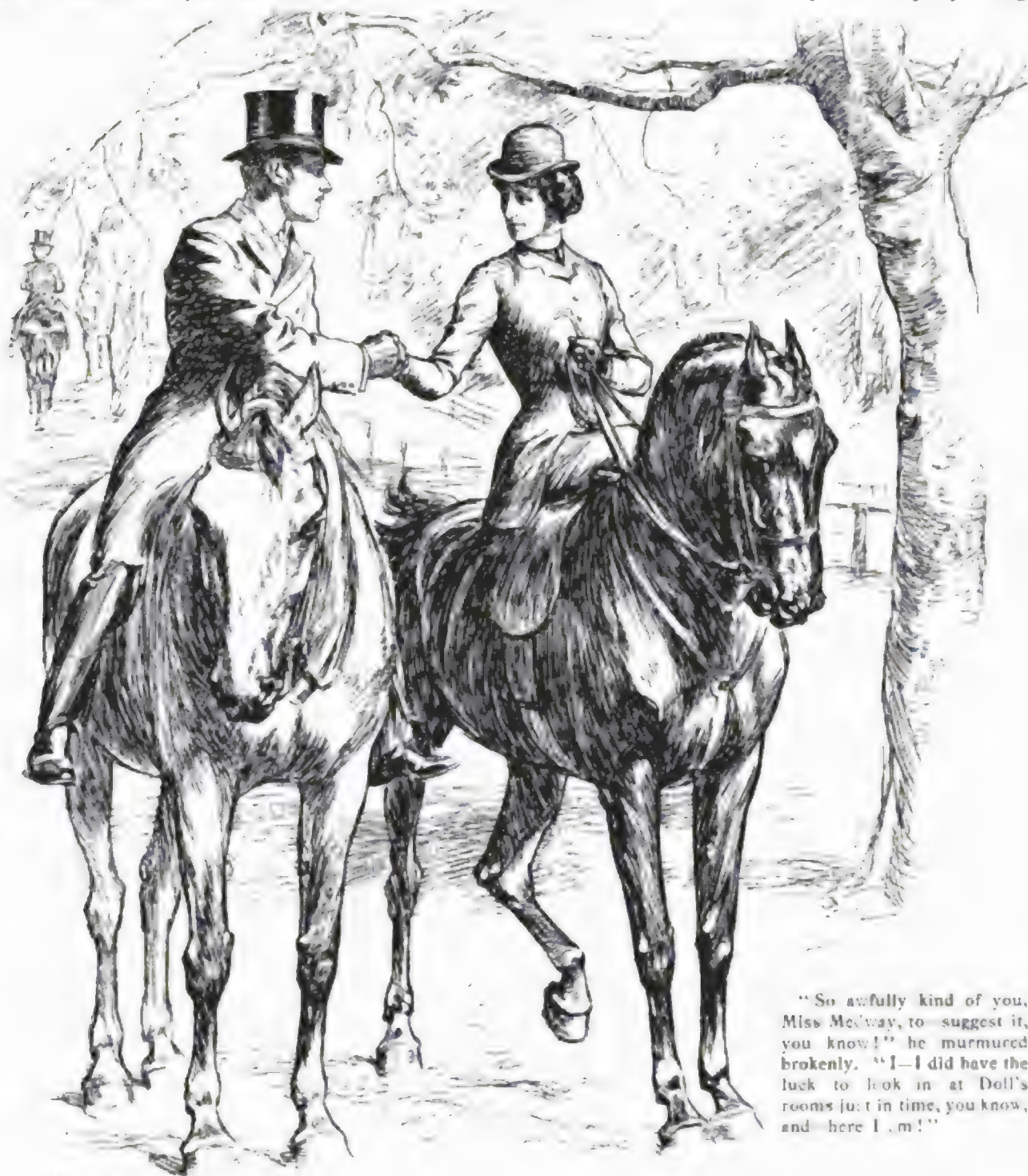
Then the boy's chubby lips parted in agitation. He took that letter from the mantelpiece, held it towards his heart, and engaged in heated colloquy with himself. Was it for him or was it not? What had she said about his nephew Doll? Was it enough, or anything like enough, to lead him to suppose that she was on terms of correspondence with Doll? What had she said? Oh, yes; he remembered!

"I do just know Mr. Dollington Bagshawe," she had said, with a remote, very remote, smile, when he had asked the question casually.

He asked it to make conversation as much as anything else. A fellow has to ask all sorts of unnecessary questions to give a woman her proper chance to become animated. A woman is always at her best

when she is animated, especially a beautiful woman. Therefore she forgives a fellow any sort of a silly question which presents her with that same proper chance. She knows how she looks—trust her; and bless her, too! And there you are!

The boy's chest swelled to a degree that would have alarmed his tailor into the fear that he had made a misfit with that important frock-coat after all. He read the note a second time, and his doubts fled. Of course, it was for him. It was just the jolly thing



"So awfully kind of you, Miss Medway, to suggest it, you know!" he murmured brokenly. "I—I did have the luck to look in at Doll's rooms just in time, you know, and—here I am!"

"It's as plain as Euclid she means it for me," said the boy to himself. "Isn't it?" He tore open the letter.

11, St. James's Avenue, W.

I shall be riding at four o'clock. If you receive this in time, and like to join me for a gallop, you will find me at the Apsley House end between 4 o'clock and 4.10.—C. M.

she would do, from what he had seen of her. And how frightfully flattering! She had already called him John—"My dear John," to be precise, with the sweetness of look and voice a fellow gets accustomed to in his mother, but doesn't at all expect in the girl he's in sudden love with—and—well, after all, you know, there wasn't, perhaps, so

much to wonder at in this sort of public assignation, when you know how the fashionable world disports itself! Not at all, on third thoughts. The lovely little green and-gold timepiece in a corner chimed its silver bell. The boy looked at it. Half-past three! He did not look a second time to make sure. He trusted the clock implicitly, as why should he not?

He saw and realised enough to convince him that he hadn't a single instant to spare if he was to keep that glorious appointment. Withers and the lemon-squash were completely forgotten. He bolted from the room and down to the pavement. Thence it was lightning work to get into a hansom, bribe the man preposterously to flash him into the nearest livery stables, and choose a suitable mount for his coming bliss. There is no need to enlarge upon his agitation among the grooms and the stablemen, as he viewed the different steeds on hire, from greys to blacks. Every moment was priceless, and when he pitched upon a massive grey that would have harmonised well with a rheumatic field-marshal weighing sixteen stone, and had no other patent recommendations save its colour and its peaceful temper, he was blind to the mirth of the menials who served him.

"I don't want a beggar that'll frighten a lady or her horse," he had said; "and I don't want a thing that's no better than three legs and a tail."

The grey answered to neither of these bitter descriptions. This fact was pointed out to him fluently by the groom who had his business in hand. Nothing more remained to be said. The boy was soon in a heavy, swinging gallop towards the Park. He felt that an epoch in his life had arrived, and he could afford—couldn't he just?—to be indifferent to all the world, except the owner of those radiant, grey blue eyes to whom he was speeding near Apsley House.

Tall hat, frock-coat, poppy-red tie, lavender trousers, and the pale-yellow gloves with which, as a tiresome sacrifice to fashion, he had covered his raw-meat hands—the attractive whole of him was shaken towards the Park at a pace that seemed to interest the grey as much as the policemen and others who had time to spare for smiles and stares.

But he had his reward. There she was, standing talking to a gentleman, in whose attire and air of serene greatness even the

critical F.O. clerk could have found no blemish. She had one arm on her chestnut's neck. She was laughing. She looked queenly, indeed; quite faultless. And it was towards her that the eager boy approached, with a face like a mammoth pippin's; short of breath himself, his horse shorter still, and both not at all suspecting that they were quite singularly out of place.

But the magnificent Miss Medway had many other qualities as well as those merely skin-deep ones which dazzled most beholders. She was surprised, of course, when the boy came nearer still, bowed, and waited. Her own bow was cordial and kind enough when she recognised him. It was followed by the ghost of a blush, which the boy appropriated rapturously. For a minute or two it was followed by nothing more solid. Then, however, Christine Medway's own mind had grappled successfully with the curious visitation which seemed to have come upon her. She dismissed her other friend and gave it all her attention. The boy was almost crazy with happiness.

"So awfully kind of you, Miss Medway, to—suggest it, you know!" he murmured brokenly. "I—I did have the luck to look in at Doll's rooms just in time, you know, and—here I am!"

"Doll's?" said Miss Medway, smiling on, but puzzled evidently.

"My nephew Jack's, you know—Jack Dollington Bagshawe. And, oh, I say, what a lark if he had opened it! Supposing he had? It's a nuisance our both being J. Bagshawe—at least, it would have been, wouldn't it?"

The boy laughed. Even the grey turned its head at that laugh and contemplated the laughter. It had been covertly diverted by many a customer since its livery days began, but it hadn't often heard such a free and hearty laugh as that.

"Oh—I see!" said Miss Medway slowly.

She gave the boy one more of those semi-motherly looks of hers which had already marked him for life. She smiled on. Practice had made her perfect in smiles. The boy didn't know that she was taking stock of him from head to foot, even while she was smiling as no heathen goddess—even the liveliest—had ever smiled in ancient literature. And he had no conception at all that she was almost pitying him when the veiled and kindly inspection was over.

"Well, John," she said briskly, "it's no use loitering here, is it? It's very nice of you to have come, and you shall tell me about yourself as we go along. It is safe, isn't it?"

She nodded at the grey. The horse had lately yawned; its pensive and experienced eyes were now closed in slumber.

"Oh," said the boy, "he's all right! A bit fleshy, perhaps, but I'll keep him in hand. This"—he lowered his voice—"is an afternoon I shall remember as long as I live."

He spoke true words. The magnificent Miss Medway laid herself out to be nice to him, and she managed her chestnut with a superb regard for the hay-cutting side-throw of the grey's sturdy hoofs. The grey behaved more than decorously. Any other horse of its size and class would have shown some curiosity about such a companion as Miss Medway's beautiful thoroughbred. But the grey looked straight before it all the time and gave its absorbed rider no trouble.

If Miss Medway did shorten her exercise by a few minutes, the boy was not in the secret. She asked him a thundering lot of splendid questions—about what he intended to be, and so on; and she said he was right about being a soldier. It was the very thing for him, she said; he had the perfect physique of one—or he would have by and-by. Of course, it was a year or two late in life to take it up; but he'd get over that, he assured her, since she liked the idea. And then she asked him a lot of questions about his nephew Doll, as if she took an interest in him quite for her companion's sake.

It was too soon over, this gallop of a lifetime. Then she gave him her hand.

"I think, my dear John," she said, allowing him this time to do all the finger-squeezing, "I'd rather you didn't talk about our little adventure this afternoon with anyone. Not even with your nephew Doll, if you don't mind. I—I'm afraid it wasn't quite the thing to have written that note. To confess the truth to you, I regretted it as soon as I had sent it. It struck me as—well, rather forward, if you see what I mean."

The boy's purple blush in proof of his pride in this personal appeal to his discretion—nay, to his very honour—was worth perpetuating in a chromo-photograph. But there was no one at hand to give him such immortality.

"Christine!" he stammered, and nothing more.

She touched her chestnut after that, and smiled herself towards the Knightsbridge gate. And the boy returned thoughtfully to the livery stables at a walk which well suited the thoughtful grey. He gave the livery stables groom a tip which made the man fancy for a moment that he had been entertaining and entertained by a young semi-foreign Royal Highness.

III.

All this was in March.

The very next day a cloud fell upon the magnificent Miss Medway which removed her and her uncle from public life for several weeks. Lady Courtly was taken seriously ill during the journey into Worcestershire, where Sir Horace had a battlemented place on the Severn, and both her husband and Christine were wired for. Throughout April and well into May anxiety reigned at Hoppington Hall, the country seat of Sir Horace. Only when the middle of May was passed was the crisis also favourably passed. Only then was the magnificent Miss Medway willing to be persuaded by her uncle to think a little about the pleasures, for example, of the coming summer.

Lady Courtly also had words to say on the subject. There were a multitude of invitations for her and her relatives to choose from, if they wanted to leave Worcestershire.

"My dear child," said Lady Courtly, on her couch, "I insist on your going somewhere. People will be calling you the pale Miss Medway, or even the consumptive Miss Medway, instead of ——"

"Don't, aunt!" said Christine, interrupting. "I never could understand who gave me that other silly title, and I'm sure I'm very glad if I have outgrown it. I never did feel magnificent and I hope I never shall."

"Nature gave it to you, my dear," said Lady Courtly. She fondled her niece's pretty hand, and recurred to the subject of summer festivities. Among the many letters was one to Christine from Lady Bagshawe of Springhill. It came up for consideration, like the rest. Its tone was exceptionally cordial. There was one sentence in it which amused Lady Courtly very much—"My son joins me in earnestly hoping that it will be possible for you to join us. His admiration for you is unbounded!" The two notes of exclamation amused Lady Courtly as much as the sentence.

"Why shouldn't you go there, my dear?" she asked—"you and your uncle? He and Sir John are very old friends, and they are sure to have nice people—though I can't say I care for the Havertons. I always thought it a pity young Bagshawe—"

"Which of them?" asked Christine a trifle wickedly.

"Not your admirer! The Foreign Office one. You must have met him. A very superfine person, with genuine ability, I have heard. I always think it must be so hard for a young man like that to be ousted out of a title by a schoolboy. How he must detest his young uncle!"



"Isn't life a comedy?" she asked suddenly. "We have been told so, I believe," he replied, "by men who have found it a tragedy."

Christine looked into the distance, but said nothing. And then the sunniest of smiles stole to her lips as she recalled that famous gallop with the hired grey. She had had little time since, and even less inclination, to remember appreciatively that picturesque incident of her last day in town.

"What is it, my dear?" asked Lady Courtly.

"Nothing—that is, not much; but if you really wish to banish us, and Uncle Horace feels like going to Springhill, I—I think I should like it, too."

That was how Sir Horace Courtly and Christine came to Springhill for the summer.

Others were there, too, of course—some important, and some of no consequence to anyone except themselves. There was Miss Julia Haverton, Sir John's sister-in-law, who at fifty was still quite young, seemed younger every summer, indeed, for the last ten years. The Americans—Mr., Mrs. and Miss Links—were there as a kind of social "entremets." They could bring laughter to the lips of the deafest and dumbest of individuals. Lord Sappleton's, for example, a decrepit, nonagenarian statesman, whose withered hand was perpetually curved about his withered right ear—the better one—to catch the echoes of a joke. Pam Bew, one

of life's conventional pleasure-seekers, would have graced any countryhouse. He, too, was at Springhill, and six of the other guests said promptly to Lady Bagshawe "How lucky you are to get him!" He never did foolish things, and took vast pains—quite needless—never to say wise ones. But he had manners, a wardrobe, and unlimited means. Though fifty-three, he still had every intention of marrying some day. The sight of him was enough to brighten many a

lady's eyes. Of course, also, the Harrow boy was at home, and his eager little sister, Jenny. And the Springhill rector-cousin, with his wife, Sir John's elder daughter, and Jack Bagshawe, the F.O. clerk, the latter on his annual vacation—were of the party, equally of course.

Only these counted.

To Christine everyone counted. She had the great gift of making this apparent. But one or two counted more than the rest. The F.O. clerk did not seem quite so happy as he was expected to be. There were reasons for this. That large-nosed second wife of his grandfather had a peculiar tongue, and,

one might suppose, very peculiar ambitions, too. Before Sir Horace and his niece arrived she had spread it about that her boy and Christine were as good as engaged.

"Naturally," she explained, "there will be no marriage till John is of age, but it will be a great thing for him. Nothing suits a Haverton—or a Bagshawe either for that matter—so well as a very early marriage. John is eighteen. Christine Medway has eighty thousand pounds, and is only twenty-two."

If her auditors opened their eyes very wide to such news—not to mention their ears—they did it unobtrusively, not at all as if they held briefs to deny the truth of such monstrous intelligence. Only one of them had anything positive to say in opposition. This was the F.O. clerk.

"What?" he cried, when the news was wafted his way also.

His grandmother by marriage said it all over again, somewhat stiffly this time, for she didn't care very much for her husband's flawless grandson. He was often too icy, she said. And then the F.O. clerk exclaimed, "I don't believe it!" and left the room.

For him that was an extraordinary display of rudeness and feeling, but under Lady Bagshawe's guidance it was interpreted sympathetically, rather than otherwise, as just commonplace jealousy. The one John Bagshawe envied the other and younger John Bagshawe the various silver spoons with which his mouth had been supplied at birth, and by a loving Fate afterwards. Since that March day, the F.O. clerk had seen neither his young uncle nor Christine.

He had written a rather formal letter of inquiry to Hoppington Hall, but Sir Horace had answered that. He had neither written to his uncle, nor run over to Harrow to make inquiries, kindly or otherwise, about that farcical love-affair of the boy's. He had endeavoured to forget the Bedlamite business, nor had he found it difficult. And he had not wondered greatly when the boy greeted him with one of his purplest blushes and most eccentric smiles on his arrival at Springhill.

"How are you, old chap?" the uncle had said heatedly to his nephew. But he seemed afterwards quite anxious to get away somewhere else.

It was this same day that Lady Bagshawe shot the startling rocket about her son's engagement, "as it may really be called," to

borrow from her corollary. And it was into the midst of this hot-bed of emotions about her that the magnificent Miss Medway was dropped. The beauty of her smile, and the perfect friendliness of her greeting of him affected the F.O. clerk deeply. Again he fancied that there was that earlier glow of peculiar intimacy in her lovely, grey-blue eyes, while her hand rested in his, and she replied to his questions about Lady Courtly. But he was unnerved by the sight of his uncle and his gloating eyes, as this fortunate wretch stood waiting his convenient turn for a handshake; and of course, it was no moment for more than courtesy words.

Very soon he became convinced that for him that season never would recur. Christine's manner by the dinner-hour was one new in his experience and that of the others. She seemed both cold and distant towards everyone. She seemed taller, too, by about three inches, and infinitely more stately than any of the Springhill people had ever seen her. And somehow the F.O. clerk would rather anyone had had the pleasure of taking her to the table instead of himself.

Never had her friends seen her so studiously devoted to the service of the mere commonplaces of conversation as on this evening, in its earlier hours. Only once did the glory of a natural smile brighten her charming face, and then only for an instant. It was when she happened to see the Harrow boy's raw-meat face through the twigs of a small, white camellia tree. The Harrow boy had been paired on to Miss Nellie Links, the American, and her wit had begun to terrify him. He was in that moment staring at Christine obliquely through the interstices of a camellia tree much as a poor little hungry Stepney street arab might stare at a tipsy cake in a West End pastry-cook's window. But, to his discomfort, the F.O. clerk saw that momentary brightening of his neighbour's face, and misread it. It was then his turn to suffer from an absolutely chilled heart.

Christine's maid, Ethel, had wrought this change in her mistress. She had communicated the amazing rumours that were afloat in the house; and sweet-natured though the magnificent Miss Medway was, she could not all at once treat the report as a joke. Neither could she scowl at the fat-faced young heir of the house of Bagshawe in accordance with the due demands of her reputation. She was still halting

unconsciously between these alternative courses when the dinner neared its end. Then, on an odd, feminine impulse, she became almost eager to talk to the F.O. clerk.

"Isn't life a comedy?" she asked suddenly.

He looked her in the eyes. Again there was radiant encouragement for him.

"We have been told so, I believe," he replied, "by men who have found it a tragedy."

"And you?" she asked on.

"Oh, I—I expect I have a good deal still to learn about it, Miss Medway," he said.

"And yet you are young enough to think you know all about it, aren't you?" said she.

He smiled his superior smile, which wasn't quite so superior as usual, and suited him better for that reason.

"I fancy I was—a week ago," he said.

"And now?"

"Now? Oh, I sha'n't be so much at the house here as I meant to be, that's all," he said. "I'm studying Persian. They want me to go to Teheran, I'm told. I can work better at the rectory, that's all."

He hoped to goodness he was not showing the hair of a regret or a reproach, or anything that might tend to humiliate her or himself. Never had he held himself more tightly bridled. The magnificent Miss Medway gave him one more look of consequence and then looked down at her plate. He did not see the triumphant little movement of her beautiful mouth.

He returned to the rectory as soon as he could without exciting his grandfather's second wife; nor did he, in the meantime, exchange another word with the magnificent Miss Medway. It was about enough for him that she seemed to have recovered her former ease and vivacity as soon as she was freed from the restraint of his neighbourhood. He found no consolation in viewing his miserable uncle, who lurched hither and thither about the drawing-rooms like a fat, and rather inebriated, spirit condemned to eternal restlessness. He saw nothing, either, of Christine's comedy of life in the hoydenish conduct of Miss Jennie Bagshawe, his miniature aunt, in her loud attempts to interest, and even fascinate, Mr. Pam Bew. This gentleman sat with folded hands on his knees, and smiled stimulatingly upon the young lady. She told him, with quite a finished air of coquetry, about the spills she had had hunting, and how nice Lord

Somebody had been about the last one. The F.O. clerk went home flat and dispirited, in short, and resolved to forget the magnificent Miss Medway.

IV.

The next day the F.O. clerk kept himself much to himself, having a ride over to a college friend in the next county. He got home late, and went straight to bed, and it was only when his purple-faced uncle met him at the rectory breakfast-table the next morning that he could begin to hope afresh. The rector and his wife had already finished breakfast and had left the room.

"Good morning, old chap!" said the uncle, sheepishly.

"How are you?" said the nephew. "And what's the matter?"

"Oh, nothing! It's a jolly boating morning, that's all!"

The nephew made no comment, but remarked: "All well at the house?"

"First class—at least, our lot are. Old Sap's got something on his liver. What a funny beggar that Yank, Mr. Links, is! When Lord Sap's man told us what his master had got, Mr. Links yelled out: 'That's nothing to what I've got! I've got an appetite in my stomach!' Aunt Julia called it hideously coarse of him; but it was jolly good, I think, don't you?"

"I've heard your Aunt Julia applaud duller things," said the F.O. clerk, "and, if you'll excuse my saying so, coarser ones, too!"

"You're right there!" said the boy. He grinned like a pantomime mask.

The coffee came in, and the nephew told the maid to go away. Now that the grin had gone from it, his uncle's face was beginning to interest him. In profile, whistling, as it looked out of the window towards the shining waters of the lake in the distance, it was quite interesting. There was more of the expression natural to its time of life than the nephew had just lately seen upon it.

"So you're going boating, are you?" suggested the nephew.

"Rather. And so are you!"

"I think not."

"Oh, but you are, old chap! You must come! Miss Medway particularly hopes you will."

He turned from the window, and, blushing like nothing less than a beetroot in its natural complexion, went to the buffet, rested his

back against it, and poured forth the confession that he had come to make.

"Look here, Doll," he said, hoarsely, "you've no idea what an ass I've been! I—I—it wasn't me she—er—ever thought a tuppenny taper about. It was just because I was your uncle—uncle be hanged! It was only that that made her make such a fuss about me! My mother's an idiot! Er—do you mind if I have another cup of coffee?"

important again as long as I live. They see such a beastly lot more than a man, and—er—aren't quite straight about it, either. She promised she'd keep it a secret—about the ride and all the rest of it. Oh, but I forgot! That's what I've got to tell you; Miss Medway said I must, though she'd far rather not. She's leaving this afternoon, because she thinks Lady Courtly will be lonely, after all."



"She had it out with me yesterday morning after breakfast," continued the boy, grasping the coffee-pot.

"She can be awfully cutting on a fellow without saying much."

"Take the whole pot," said the F.O. clerk, calmly. For about the first time in his life he was trembling, though no one, to look at him, would have thought so.

"She had it out with me yesterday morning after breakfast. She can be awfully cutting on a fellow, without saying much. Just in two or three words, you know. But I swear it was my mother who started that about our being engaged. It all came of telling her. I'll never tell a woman anything

The nephew pushed away his breakfast things and produced a cigarette.

"Ride?" he said.

"Yes, ride!" said the uncle, savagely. The vision of himself and that columnar grey, both out on a misunderstanding, was no caramel to his memory. But he was not a Bagshawe for nothing. He told the whole tale, and ended thus:

"That's the lot, Jack; and, if you take my tip, you'll just walk in and win."

Y Y.

The F.O. clerk was pacing the room ere his uncle had finished his story. He did not look much like a diplomatist as he now slapped his uncle on the shoulder and said :

"You're a good chap, Johnny—a regular young brick !"

"No ; I'm an ass !" said the boy.

"Then asses are rare good chaps, too, that's all I have to say !" said the nephew. "And I think I'll go for a row !"

He left the room with a song in his heart. They went off together across the lawn and the meadows beyond, which sloped gradually towards the lake. The boy was in great talkative form now that he had cleared his conscience. Among other things, he pointed out to his nephew what a handicap it would have been for him to go up to Oxford an engaged man. Why, he'd have been the laughing-stock of the place ! "And such a weight off a fellow's mind, too !" Furthermore, he expressed his candid opinion that his sister was a caution. She had mocked him about the magnificent Miss Medway, and, if he knew anything, she was trying to take the bloom off the affections of Pam Bew, who was old enough to be her grandfather. And so they came to the rectory corner of the lake and pulled out their boat.

And there were still songs of a right royal and other kinds singing away in the F.O. clerk's well-secreted heart. A wooded headland intervened between them and the main body of the lake. It hid the Springhill towers and all else except the sunny blue sky overhead. The sound of voices and laughter came faintly to them from the other side of the headland ; but it hid the owners of the voices. The F.O. clerk, however, didn't care what it hid. There wasn't much in life that he wanted to discover in that moment. Somehow, he believed all he wanted to believe.

It was just like Fate, moreover, simply to deluge him with golden gifts from its cornucopia that morning—overwhelming, indeed, and not without strong menace to tragedy, but with crowning compensation afterwards. They were making for the pine-tufted nose of the headland, when who should come round the corner but the magnificent Miss Medway herself, alone.

"Look !" cried the uncle to his nephew. And then instantly his note changed. "I say," he yelled, "Miss Medway, mind—do mind that tree !"

He rested on his oars and gazed about him for practical assistance. His warning had come too late. They had both heard the crash as the light skiff containing the young lady collided with the solitary tree which reared its crest out of the water, and, before their eyes, the magnificent Miss Medway had sank like a mermaid returning to her subaqueous palace abode. She went in gracefully, and was now hanging on by her hands to the sinking skiff. She did not utter a word, but just looked towards the F.O. clerk. Then, for once, the F.O. clerk was a bad second to his uncle in worldly wisdom. He did not turn his eyes about for practical help, but dived, like an arrow from a bow, into the water and swam towards the scene of disaster. Christine's whisper to him to be careful was only an additional incentive to him to be careless of his own personal risk. There were now two of them in, and only one in sight.

The F.O. clerk had worsened matters for the magnificent Miss Medway and himself. The sinking boat had slid him under inevitably. He made one futile grab and disappeared.

Years of life were compressed like pemmican into the next few minutes for all three of them. The Harrow boy had no time to shiver with fright, in the enormity of his responsibility. He didn't realise that enormity. Perhaps it was well he didn't. What he did, he did quickly. He pulled his boat up to the scene of the accident with all his might, and Miss Medway was soon secure from death by drowning. But she did not move to help herself until the boy had implored her.

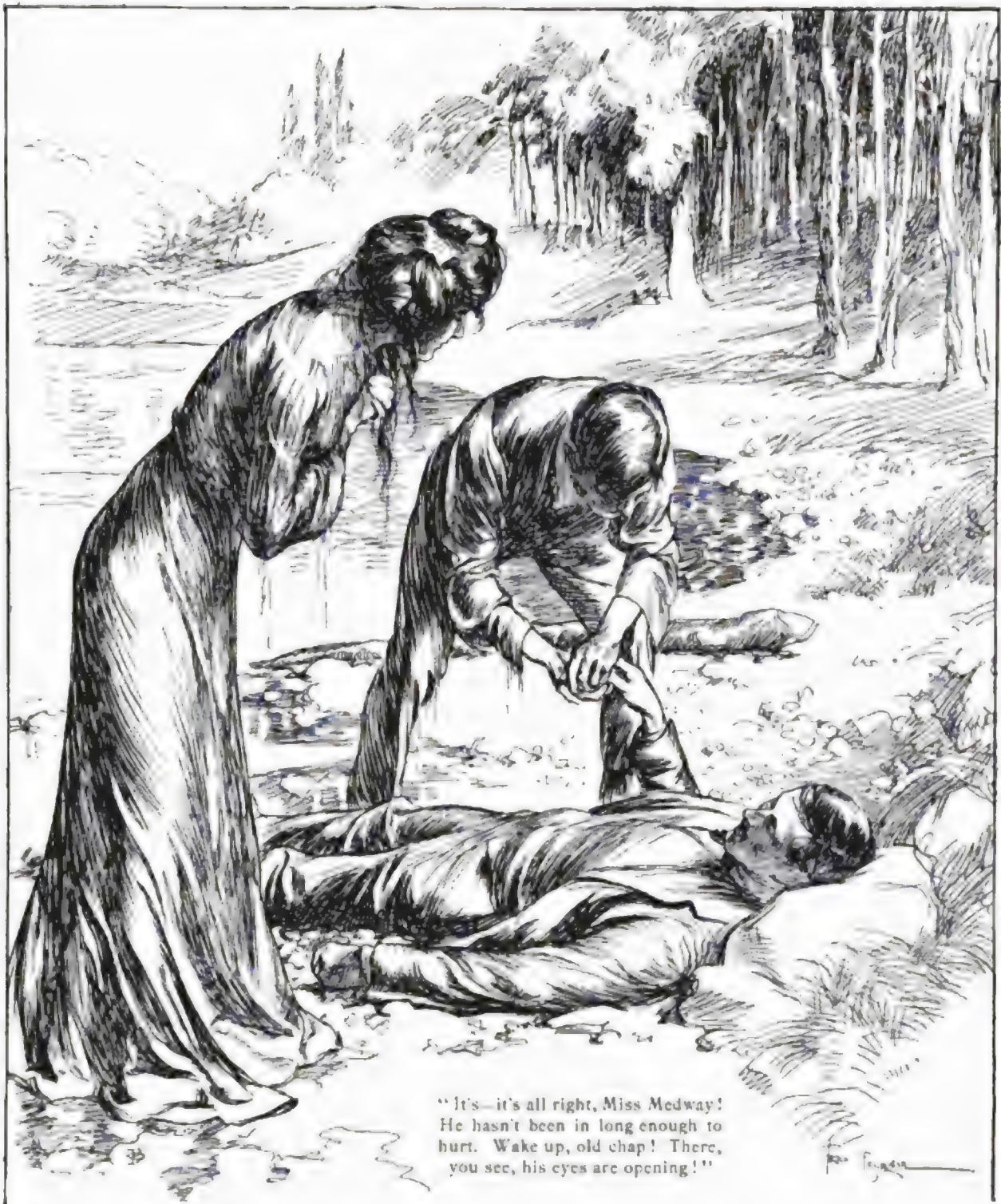
"I'll get him out ! I will, really !" he cried from the boat. "Only please come out first."

It was a hand-over-hand business. Before she was out, the boy was in.

And for a lifetime, as it seemed to her, standing dripping in the boat, the magnificent Miss Medway watched for the reappearance of the Harrow boy, alone or not alone. She stood with clasped hands, dilating eyes, and a sickening heart. At last a head came up and shook itself violently, and a frantic arm beat the glistening water and clutched at the boat.

"I've got him !" yelled the boy. And slowly he drew up a limp something into the genial sunlight, and started to lift it into the craft.

The magnificent Miss Medway began to cry. She was crying steadily when the uncle



had succeeded in landing his superior nephew. She did not know that she was shivering violently. She only knew that she had never felt more happy, grateful, and inclined to pray forth thanksgivings. And so she cried and cried.

"It's—it's all right, Miss Medway!" stuttered the boy, as he chafed the F.O. clerk's hand. "He hasn't been in long enough to hurt. I was jolly lucky to get him. And look here! I'll cut off and fetch help. Wake up, old chap! There, you see, his eyes are opening! He's all right!"

Before the boy could start to scurry clumsily across the headland, one of Christine's wet arms was round his wet neck. She kissed him on his Orleans plum-coloured cheek, and whispered, "Thank you, dear!"

The boy fled after that. He didn't think much about the kiss at the time, nor too much about it afterwards. It briskened him, but he perfectly understood what it meant.

And the magnificent Miss Medway sat down, and, with tears of happiness flowing from her beautiful eyes, began to chafe the F.O. clerk's cold hands.

















THE · ETIQUETTE · OF THE · MOTOR · CAR ·

By ALFRED HARMSWORTH.

ALTHOUGH there is as yet no established etiquette for motor driving, it is time that emphasis was laid on the necessity for the strictest observance of the ordinary usages of the road, and of the importance of showing great consideration for other wayfarers.



Drivers of automobiles have to remember that the public is still far from being educated as to the wonderful facility with which these carriages can be controlled. It is, therefore, not unnatural, for example, that a governess, who, in many households, is, however ignorant of driving, so rashly sent out to drive the children, should make a ridiculous exhibition of herself on approaching a motor; but, on the other hand, it should not be forgotten that much of her nervousness proceeds from the fact that she has a serious responsibility, and **should be assisted in every way.**

A prime essential of the modern motor car is that it should not be silent, but silenceable. A silent motor car would be the cause of many unexpected accidents, unless a loudly-ringing gong or horn were continually in operation. The noise of the motor car proceeds from the exhaust-box. It is now quite possible to obtain an exhaust that can render an automobile almost as silent as an electric carriage, and that when opened, or partly opened, can be used as a warning signal. On approaching or passing any horse, vehicle or equestrian, it should be the duty of the motor driver to render his machine as quiet as possible.

Another danger that must be overcome is the bright glare of the acetylene lamps at night. It should not be difficult to devise some means for shading **them when approaching foot or other passengers.**

Much of the odium in which motor cars are held would be removed were manufacturers to take in hand the production of devices calculated to make the new form of locomotion less objectionable. Such points may not be, strictly speaking, those of etiquette, but they have to do with the give and take that is necessary in all departments of life, and which is the foundation of all etiquette. Until local authorities so construct their roads that they are dustless, drivers of automobiles should endeavour to cause as little trouble as possible to others by proceeding at a more moderate speed in or near the neighbourhood of those who may be inconvenienced by the fog of dust caused by the use of large-size tyres on the roads as they exist at present.

It should be, at least, a point of etiquette not to annoy ladies by this nuisance, and while maintaining one's rights and privileges to the utmost, make some excuse for the prejudice, ignorance and nervousness with which all new inventions are received.

FIGHTING THE CANCER SCOURGE.

No problem of medicine or surgery excites such keen anxiety at the present time as that of how to discover the cause of cancer, and how to cure it, and none has so successfully baffled and bewildered the investigators. At the invitation of the Editor of the LONDON MAGAZINE, an eminent surgeon, who is universally recognised as one of the foremost cancer specialists of the day, kindly furnished the following interesting explanation of the most notable features of the present "War against Cancer." Medical etiquette necessitates that the communication should be printed anonymously.

OF the terrible reality of the problem how in the first place to discover the exact nature of the disease called cancer, and what it is caused by, and then to discover a cure for it, there can be no two opinions. It is by far the most difficult with which medical and surgical science is confronted, and though I am convinced that sooner or later it will be solved, it cannot be said that any circumstance encourages the belief that such a satisfactory result of the investigations which are being pursued throughout the civilised world is at all imminent.

The crux of the problem is to discover the cause of these malign growths called cancer; when that is found out it is as certain as anything in medicine and surgery can be that the remedy will quickly follow. But so far, it has to be admitted, we are in a state of practically complete ignorance on this point. It has been said that salt is the chief cause of cancer. Savages, who get little salt, it has been pointed out, are not affected by the disease. Though most domestic animals are subject to it, the pig, which, almost alone of them, does not get salt in its food, is apparently immune. It is argued, moreover, that cancer is rare in prisons and workhouses where a limited amount of animal food is supplied to the inmates, and that it is very prevalent in districts where the people eat large quantities of bacon. But these, and many others like them, are merely vague speculations. We simply do not know.

At the moment the best remedy we can suggest to an afflicted patient is the surgeon's knife. How unsatisfactory is this to both the patient and the surgeon when the uneasy knowledge is always present in the mind that no matter how carefully and how thoroughly the surgical operation may be accomplished, it is always quite possible that sooner or

later the malignant growth may make a reappearance in an entirely different part of the body. A member may be diseased with it, and the sufferer, to save himself, may submit to the sacrifice of that member. And even twenty years later, when the unhappy matter had been almost forgotten, the growth may spring up again in an entirely opposite part of the body, though in the interval the most acute doctor could find no trace of it in the system.

Cancer is a veritable will-o'-the-wisp among diseases; its vagaries excite even the wonder of the medical man. But it is a pained wonder. Forty or fifty years ago, of the apparent sufferers from cancer rather less than five per cent. succumbed to it. Now the proportion has risen to ten per cent., and the returns show that in London alone in 1901 no fewer than 4,251 people died of it. Such figures show what a real interest this war against cancer must have for the multitude, and what a glorious victory—perhaps the most glorious of all—it will be if medical science at last can overcome the disease. In time it will surely do so, but as yet one can hardly hazard a guess as to how. It is sufficient to suggest that we look upon the X-Rays as perhaps the most formidable weapon that has so far been placed in our hands.

Now at the outset of any consideration of this subject the question arises as to whether there is any increase in the prevalence of the disease. Medical men differ. As far as medical knowledge can ascertain, the death from it are twice as numerous now as they were half-a-century ago, but it does not follow that the disease is twice as prevalent. The diagnosis of cancer is much keener, as one might say, than it used to be. Not very long ago there used to be a prejudice amongst medical men against returning

cancer as the cause of death upon a death certificate, a prejudice largely caused through ignorance. What it is clear now was cancer of the bowels would then be returned as intestinal obstruction, and so on. But in the last thirty years the registration of deaths has been much more exact, post-mortem examinations have become much more frequent, and therefore it may happen that much of this seeming increase is due to more accurate diagnosis. We do not know what is the nature of cancer, and until we do know our efforts are sure to be to a large extent baffled.

Cancer is one of a great class of growths or tumours which are called malignant to distinguish them from benign tumours, and I will try to show you what it is, or what it seems to be as far as we know. The great features of malignant or cancerous tumours are as follow:—The chief is, perhaps, its steady, progressive growth. By that I mean that a malignant tumour once started steadily advances, sometimes rapidly, sometimes slowly. It never stops. Benign tumours, on the other hand, very commonly grow to a certain point and then stop. A second great feature of the cancerous tumour is that it grows into the tissues of the body and not in them. By this distinction is meant that a cancerous tumour has no limiting wall to shut itself out from the rest of the body, and thus, for example, a cancerous tumour of the lip will infiltrate into the gums, and so onwards. Benign or simple tumours have a capsule or wall which shuts them off. They do not become incorporated with the tissues of the body. A third feature of the cancerous tumour is that when it is removed there is a great tendency for it to recur. Fourthly, if a cancerous tumour starts up anywhere in the body there is a great tendency for other cancerous tumours of the same nature to spring up in other parts of the body. These are called secondary growths. For instance, a cancer of the breast frequently causes cancer of the lung, of the liver, of the spine, and this though there is no apparent connection between the two. Again, cancerous tumours ulcerate, form sores and, as a rule, are, in their later stages, very painful. They may cause a form of blood poisoning, great wasting, loss of appetite and—death. Benign tumours do not recur; they do not ulcerate except in very unusual circumstances, and are only fatal in some cases when they grow on an organ which is essential to life. Thus

we see how the simple cancer tumour, as it may appear to be, differs from all others, how it is infinitely more terrible, and how exasperating and mysterious it is to those who would battle with it.

As I have already sufficiently indicated, at present there can unfortunately be nothing more than guesses as to the cause of these cancerous tumours; but I will explain what the chief of these guesses are. There are two. One is that there is some parasite which gets into the body and sets up this diseased growth. Great efforts have been made for years to discover it, and several observers have from time to time thought that they had at last succeeded; but the supposed parasites have not stood the strict tests known to be necessary. So the verdict in their case must certainly be "Not Proven." Investigation in this direction is still being carried on with great vigour. Another view is that cancer is caused by a perversion of cell life in a part of the body as a result of local irritation. Thus cancer of the lip has followed the smoking of a short clay pipe. Other parts of the body which are known to be specially liable to various forms of irritation are known also to be favourite seats of cancer. A third view is that some material taken in food exerts an injurious influence upon the cells of a part, which results in cancer. Again, it is supposed in other quarters that nervous strain and tension play an important part in bringing about cancer. The life and activity of the cells is known to be under the control of the nervous system, and it is thought that the great nervous strain which is brought about as the result of the great pressure of work and life to-day is the cause of increasing malignant disease dogging the steps of advancing civilisation.

The reason why a cancer returns after it has been cut out is believed to be because it has no limiting capsule, and that the cells or juices, or whatever it is which causes the tumours, are thus allowed to penetrate into the healthy tissues far beyond the infected part. Thus when all that is apparent of a cancer has been cut away it has really travelled beyond these parts, in what direction and to what extent being unknown. This view is strongly supported by the discovered fact that the wider the area of the surgeon's operations when cutting away a cancerous tumour, the greater is the probability of no local return. It is therefore one of our best maxims in our war against cancer, conducted

as it is at present against such heavy odds, to "go wide" in all cutting away operations. The formation of the secondary growths which have been spoken of is apparently due to the passing into the lymphatic or blood vessels of material capable of lighting up the disease in other tissues. It is specially noteworthy that the secondary growths resemble most closely in minute structure the primary growths which they follow. Therefore we say that cancer "breeds true." There are great varieties in the structure of cancer, but what the mother is, so to speak, so will the daughter be.

Such as I have related being practically the sum of our knowledge as regards cancer, what our treatment of it must be, can only be, at the present time is almost self-indicated. Simply then, the most successful treatment for cancer is the operation for its removal. And this often fails. The reasons why it does so have also been hinted at already. On the one hand, tissues left behind may be already affected, and, on the other, the malignant infection may already have been carried to a secondary part. No microscope will avail us to tell whether this is so or not. We remove a cancerous breast and the patient remains free from the disease for many years. Then perhaps two, perhaps five, ten or fifteen years afterwards there comes cancer of the liver, of the lung, or of the brain. The secondary growth is identical with the first. At the time of the first operation these organs were already affected, but we had absolutely no means of knowing that that was so. And no disease so much varies in its rate of growth as does cancer. Sometimes it will develop in three months, sometimes not for fifteen or twenty years. The most earnest advice one can give to a suspicious patient is to come to the surgeon early that the cancer may be cut away before it has stealthily and secretly spread itself over the body.

Poor as it is, this crude attack is all that we can bring to bear upon our enemy cancer at the present time, and there are two very pronounced weaknesses in the surgeon's position, even though now we get a considerable amount of success—more than ever before. We are unable to say whether we have removed all the poisoned tissue, and in the early stages of the disease, when the surgeon might so often win the day, cancer is so really painless that the patients do not come to him. So they often lose their best

chance, and again we see how stealthy, how insidious is this disease. Almost every week patients—advanced cases—come and say that they have not had their attention drawn to the fact that the disease had seized them before. There was no pain, no bleeding, and yet I am absolutely certain that they have had cancer for months. It is hard to believe that the time will ever come when the surgeon will always be able to get at it at the start.

Weak enough and hopeless enough in all conscience would our position seem to be at present. And yet, as I hinted at the beginning, it is not by any means hopeless. The best authorities amongst us are quite confident that the surgeon's knife will be superseded, and that some cure, as infallible as a cure can be, will be found for this disease. Specialists are thinking, and studying, and searching everywhere, and they will surely prevail. Let us examine the facts and circumstances which afford us most hope.

I should place foremost in this category the various forms of light treatment of disease which are now being practised. One form of semi-malignant cancer, the rodent ulcer, is quite certainly curable by the X-Rays. These rays have the effect upon other forms of cancer of lessening pain, and sometimes of healing an ulcerated surface. Very occasionally they tend to a lessening of the growth. Except in the case of the rodent ulcer, however, we cannot speak with any assurance. But we have only had knowledge of the X-Rays for a very few years, and it is argued that we are only at the very beginning of that knowledge. I am full of hope. If by this treatment we can cure the semi-malignant form, and can relieve the pain of a malignant growth, we must be influencing it in some way, and that influence may surely by some modification be increased.

Again, there are cases of cancer which get well spontaneously; even advanced cases have done so. This may seem a remarkable fact, but it is quite true. But what comfort is to be derived from it? may be asked. If rare cases happen to cure themselves, what consolation is that to all the other sufferers who are not so fortunate? There is comfort in the inevitable deduction that *there is a cure*. If the natural processes in the body are capable only once in a million times of curing the disease, of destroying it in the tissues, that affords ground for the confident hope of some means of aiding those natural

processes and making their successes more frequent—certain, perhaps. It shows that the terrible disease of cancer is not after all so terrible of contemplation as it would be if we had to reckon it as incurable by nature, incurable by art. It is not a hopeless business.

Let us glance, finally, at our points of attack in this campaign against cancer. Most people have heard much of late about the national scheme for cancer research which was inaugurated last year by the Royal College of Physicians and the Royal College of Surgeons, on behalf of which an appeal for funds has been made to the public. This scheme embraces the provision and equipment of laboratories to be devoted exclusively to cancer research, and the collection of statistical, dietetic and topographical information. A special laboratory has been fitted up at the Cancer Hospital, Brompton, and the scheme, well supported, may have far-reaching effects. It must not be forgotten, however, that its function is more to direct the work of others than to do work of its own. In Germany and the United States there are similar schemes in operation. Then there are special research laboratories at Middlesex Hospital, at Boston, New York, Berlin, and in other places. Middlesex Hospital has a special endowment for the purpose of cancer research, and has constantly a large number of patients there under observation and treatment. Experts are constantly working there, and thus this institution possesses in the way of cancer investigation an amount of material which is to be found nowhere else. A department has just been established there for X-Ray investigation, and much is expected from it. Any suggestion made by anybody for the treatment and cure of cancer is given a trial, and it matters not how wild, how improbable, how even ridiculous it may seem. To every meeting new suggestions come from persons in all walks and stations of life. They are tried, but too often, alas! a verdict of "worthless" has to be returned. Everybody has heard of the "violet cure," an external application which was declared to have a marvellous effect. No faith must be placed in it. Cancroin injections have also been tried. This is really a meat extract, and the theory is that it has some anti-toxic action, that the injurious effect of some poison in the body is counteracted.

Elaborate statistical enquiries are now being conducted with a view to eliciting from

them some fact which will put us on the right scent. This is a very elaborate piece of work; and then the geographical distribution of the disease is being carefully examined, for any deduction that may be afforded. It has been found that the disease is more prevalent in low-lying parts of the country, especially in areas frequently flooded by rivers, than in high altitudes. Certain occupations, again, seem rather to induce it, or at least it would appear to be more than usually prevalent among them. Thus, chimney sweeps seem to be addicted to a particular form of cancer. You have heard of "cancer houses," and without doubt there are cases where successive inhabitants of the same house have died from cancer. There are cases also of husband and wife being afflicted, and thus there is opened for investigation the difficult question as to the contagiousness of the disease.

Besides such organised forces as have been mentioned being brought to bear upon the enemy, there are numerous individual workers searching for the solution of the great cancer problem all over the world. There are many of them in Great Britain, America, Italy, France, Germany, Russia, in fact in all civilised countries. These men work silently, constantly, for years. Chiefly their investigations are with the microscope, and of late years they have been anxiously searching for a parasite—the cancer bacillus. These men, and all others who are fighting the battle against cancer, may be called upon to make heavy sacrifices. For the mere work of investigation there is little reward of any kind, and in the nature of things many a doctor may give up his whole life to the great task and die without having achieved any other success than that of having contributed his mite to the general sum of knowledge. Perhaps it is not the most encouraging task in which to be engaged: but think of the gigantic reward which must attend success! The man who finds a cure for cancer will have conferred a great boon on the human race, and be regarded as its benefactor for ever afterwards. Honours will be heaped upon him; his glory will be perpetual. It is the greatest prize to be gained in the medical world, perhaps the greatest left ever to be gained in it. Scarcely will peace have a victory greater than that of medical science over its crafty, elusive, most deadly foe—the malignant tumour of cancer.

TWO MEN AND A MOTOR.

A STORY TOLD IN DOCUMENTS.

By OWEN OLIVER.

(DOCUMENT 1.)

Terms:—CASH.

HILLTOP WORKS,
BIRMINGHAM.

M Fredk. Green Esq.

Dr. to THE RUSHARD AUTOMOBILE CO., LTD.

		<i>£</i>	<i>s</i>	<i>d</i>
9/5/02	Royal Rushard Automobile			
	Car, Special, No. 3, 9½ H.P.	265	0	0
	Extra fittings	25	0	0
	<u>3rd Application.</u>			
	<u>An immediate remittance is requested.</u>	£290	0	0

(DOCUMENT 2.)

The Retreat,
Friar's Road,
Calmerbury.

Aug. 23rd, 1902.

My dear Son,

It is creditable to you to be anxious to pay your debts and I am sorry that you cannot borrow the money to do so. As you know, I am unable to spare anything myself at present.

In regard to the

bill for the motor, why do you not invite your Uncle John to take a ride with you? You might perhaps persuade him to give you the assistance which he can well afford.

Your loving Mother,
Margaret Green.

P.S.—Assure him it is safe, or he will not come

(DOCUMENT 3.)

3, The Flats,

Farely.

My dear Uncle,

It would give me great pleasure if I could persuade you to take an interest in my new motor. I have a holiday on Tuesday week will you come for a ride with me?

I will not trouble to assure you that it is free from danger because I know how fearless you are, but as a matter of fact, a motor in the hands of a skilled driver like myself, is safer than your own house. Your affectionate nephew
Frederick Green.

(DOCUMENT 4.)

Shall arrive 9.8 Mon. Evening.
 Am not at all nervous, but
 wish to travel slowly to
 enjoy scenery. Prefer
 flat country. Please
 send map of route

John Green.

(DOCUMENT 5.)

The Calamity Insurance Company.

TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESS: "SMASH."
 TELEPHONE: 104,783 GERRARD

14, Standard Street,
 London, E.C.

Refer to:

c 9/109

Dear Sir,

We have pleasure in forwarding acceptance of your proposal for
 an accident insurance for £2,000. The policy will follow in due course.
 Meanwhile you are at our risk.

Yours faithfully,

John Green,

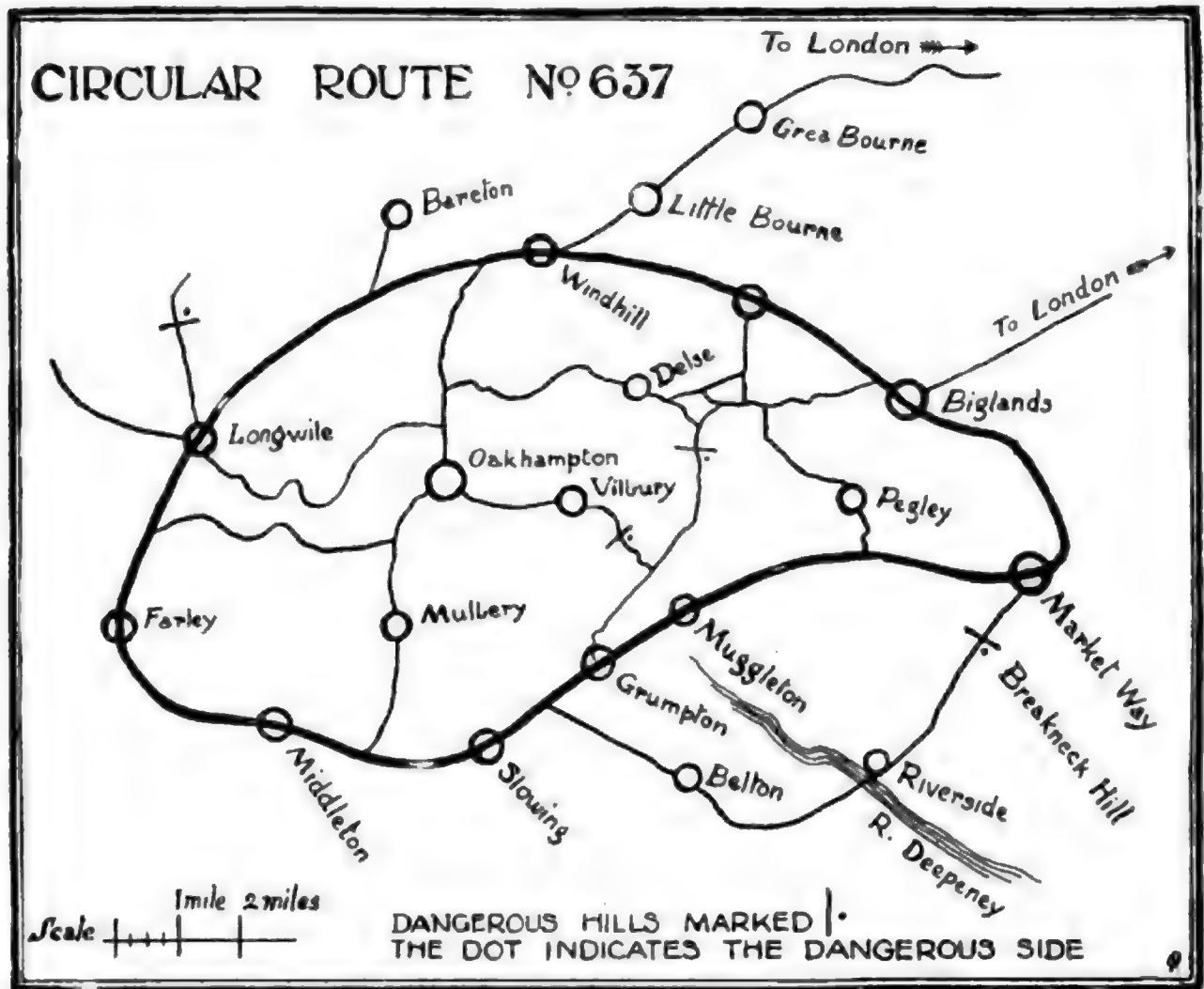
The Laurels,

Townham.

A. Sharp

General Manager.

(DOCUMENT 6.)



(DOCUMENT 7.)

Farley

10 AM

Dear Mother
Uncle & I are just
starting for a cautious
ride
Love Frederick

(DOCUMENT 8.)

Mr F. Green

Bot. of Henry Smith & Son
 Plumbers & Blacksmiths ^{The Forge Longridge}

Repairing Motor
 2 months & labor
 Paid with thanks
 H. Smith

3 -

(DOCUMENT 9.)

WINDHILL CYCLE DEPOT*All Accessories for Cycles and Motors.*

BICYCLES LET ON HIRE.

And at . .

6, Holly Rd.,

LANDBY.

M/r. Fredk. Green

Repairing Puncture

(Motor Tyre)

4

*Red.
 & Hamilton*

(DOCUMENT 10.)

Received of Mr Green in
compensation for Pigg run
over by ~~to~~ is motorcar in
full satisfaction 1 lb sterling
my father & keep the Pork

Tom farmer & is mark
witness Tom farmer

(DOCUMENT 11.)

A.		POST OFFICE TELEGRAPHS		No. of Telegram	
Prefix	Code	(Inland Telegrams)			
Office of Origin and service instructions		Words	Sent		For Postage Stamp. <i>The Stamp must be affixed by the Sender, and must not overlap. Any Stamp for which there is no room here should be affixed at the back of this Form.</i> <i>A Receipt for the Charges on this Telegram can be obtained, price Telegrams.</i>
		Charge	At		
			To		
			By		
NOTICE—This Telegram will be accepted for transmission subject to the Telegraph Acts, the Regulations made thereunder, and the Notice printed at the back hereof.					
12 words, 6 D. Every additional word, 1 D. Every word telegraphed is charged for, whether in address or text.	TO { Chief of Police, Market bay				
	Stop	motor	run	away	with
	old	gentleman	left	in	charge
	while	I	procured	refreshment	
FROM { Green, Blue Boat, Biglands					
The Name and Address of the Sender, IF NOT TO BE TELEGRAPHED, should be written in the space provided at the back of the Form.					

(DOCUMENT 14.)

RIVERSIDE PARISH COUNCIL.

15, High Street,

Riverside.

The Riverside Parish Council hereby give notice in pursuance of the powers entrusted to them by the Act 56 Victoria, cap 4293, sec 107(7) that the undermentioned sum is due to them from John Green, Esq., of Townham in the County of W. Hereinshire, viz :-

.. To replacing Milestone next to Riverside Bridge ...	£	5	2
.. To New Railings for Public Gardens - - - - -		15	0
To repairing Watercart - - - - -		4	17
To Water lost - - - - -		1	5
		0	3
		6	17
		6	

The same being the value of damages caused by an escaped Motor. car in charge of the aforesaid John Green, on Tuesday, 2nd Sept. 1902.

Legal proceedings will be instituted in the event of payment not being made within fourteen days from the date hereof

Signed on behalf of the forenamed Parish Council of Riverside on the 10th day of Sept., 1902

Aguie
Chairman

(DOCUMENT 15.)

J. Green Esq

4, Oakleigh Villas,
Townham.

In account with William Pillsdraft, M.R.C.S.

To Medicines and Attendance

From Sept 2

To Sept 9

£ s. d.

(Attending after Motor Accident 2 12 6

(DOCUMENT 16.)

... Unionists have been away unpaired in the
Bill divisions.

Editorial Chatter.

The Motor Danger.

We trust that the heavy fine inflicted upon Mr. John Green at the Market Way Police Court may have a deterrent effect upon those motorists whose reckless driving has recently rendered the roads of the locality unsafe for peaceful pedestrians. Mr. Green—who is old enough to know better—was proved by police and other evidence to have driven down Breakneck Hill at a speed of ninety miles an hour. After damaging the railings of the Public Gardens, and overturning the new water-cart, he crashed through the brick wall alongside Messrs. Sale and Sheet's Wharf, and continued his mad career across the wharf itself, until it ended in the river, sinking a boat and buoy. He was rescued by two gallant bargemen (John Castle and Joseph Munn), who stated that "he swore awful about the boat-hook, and behaved like a perfect gentleman."

As the magistrate rightly observed, the offence was aggravated by the plea which the defendant put forward in extenuation; that he had never driven a car before, and "did not know which way the things turned!" Persons who attempt to drive these dangerous vehicles in such crass ignorance of their mechanism should, in our opinion, be placed under restraint. We trust that the representations which the magistrate has addressed to the Home Office upon the subject may lead to an enquiry whether the state of Mr. Green's mind is such as to allow him to be at large without danger to His Majesty's subjects.

The New Pump at Muggleton.

"... we hath her victories, no less renowned than those of war."
... at Muggleton

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THE CALAMITY INSURANCE COMPANY.

TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESS: "SMASH."
TELEPHONE: 104,783 Gerrard.

14, Standard Street,
London, E.C.

Refer to: '8
o 109/5

Dear Sir,

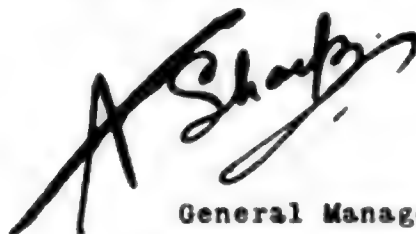
With reference to your letter of the 15th. inst., and previous correspondence, I am directed by my board to call your attention to clause 37 of the conditions of insurance, from which you will see that "the Company does not hold itself liable for damages the result of the Claimants own negligence or inability to manage any vehicle driven by self-power, which may be nominally under his own control"

Under these circumstances I regret to inform you that no compensation is admissible for your unfortunate accident.

Yours faithfully,

John Green Esq.

The Laurels,
Townham.



General Manager.

(DOCUMENT 18.)

HIGH STREET

N^o Q.41053

Townham 18. April 1902
The Rural & Urban Bank, Limited

Pay Frederick Green or Order
the sum of one Shilling —

£0=1=0

John Green.

This Cheque must be endorsed on the back by the person to whom it is payable.



COMING MEN in the HOUSE of COMMONS

By
HENRY W. LUCY
("Toby, M.P.")

SECOND ARTICLE.

AMONG many claims to distinction, Mr. Asquith has one that is unique. There is no parallel to the case of a Statesman of his rank and position attaining Cabinet rank and, on the defeat of his Party, returning to his professional work. Movement in some degree analogous is common enough in the United States. For example, Mr. Phelps, who some years ago was United States Minister at the Court of St. James, when recalled, returned to chew quietly the husks in his old office where, before he became the companion of kings, the compeer of the most illustrious people in the old country, he earned his daily bread. The difference in the cases is that the career of the ex-Minister of the United States was closed, whilst that of the ex-Home-Secretary in Mr. Gladstone's last administration was brilliantly opening.

The course adopted was honourable and manly. Accustomed since he left the University to earn his own living, Mr. Asquith was not disposed to accept its means from others, however closely connected.

Something of the same sort happened in the House of Lords on the threshold of the career of Lord Salisbury's fourth administration. Lord Hardwicke was nominated by the Premier to the office of Under Secretary for War. With a shrewdness doubtless derived from the canny first earl, Lord High Chancellor a century-and-a-half ago, the young Peer stipulated that acceptance of the honourable and desirable office should not necessarily involve withdrawal from the firm of London stockbrokers with whom he for some years had been associated. It was all very well to be an Under Secretary with a comfortable, if not lavish, salary paid quarterly. But who could say how long it would last? Ministries would come and Ministries would go; whereas the Stock Exchange went on for ever.

The condition was accepted by Lord Salisbury. But the quite novel arrangement of a Minister of the Crown being also a member of the Stock Exchange, co-partner in a firm actively engaged in its pursuits, struck Lord Rosebery and others as, to say the least, inconvenient.

Attention was called to the matter in the House of Lords. The Under Secretary for India met a difficult and delicate position in the most successful fashion. He told their sympathetic lordships how, coming into the earldom, he found it unendowed. A belted earl, there was forced upon him the necessity of earning his daily bread. This he did by finding an opening on the Stock Exchange, and he really could not afford to bar approach to return to the city when, in the natural course of events, the Ministry of which he was a humble member withdrew into the wageless shade of Opposition. This frank and fearless speech so charmed the House, that nothing more has been heard of the Under Secretary's temporarily suspended connection with the Stock Exchange.

Undoubtedly, resumption of practice at the Bar hampers Mr. Asquith. Nowhere more than in the House of Commons is it true that a man cannot serve two masters. With the exception of Mr. Chamberlain, who came in on approach to middle age, all supremely successful Parliament men from Pitt downwards to Disraeli and Gladstone, have taken their seats in comparative youth, and have spent their nights and days with the Speaker.

In the case of a barrister in large practice, the dual engagement is exceptionally arduous. Sufficient for the most robust of men is a full day's work in the Law Courts. More than sufficient for some is a sitting of the House of Commons, which, at a minimum,

runs through those eight hours that form the maximum of work for the conscientious British workman. To give up to the House of Commons towards five o'clock on a busy afternoon time which for the rest of mankind is meant for rest and recreation, is not an arrangement that promises for the second shift much chance of scoring. It is, with fatally near approach to literalism, burning the candle at both ends.

There is one circumstance peculiar to House of Commons procedure that handicaps a man in Mr. Asquith's position. Questions under the new rules commence punctually at a quarter past two, and peremptorily close at three o'clock. It often happens that on what is still called, "question hour" flashes the most critical episode of the sitting. The last five minutes are reserved for interrogatories usually put from the Front Bench, occasionally eliciting Ministerial statement on the burning question of the day. Upon this debate may follow. Mr. Asquith, engaged up to the rising of the Law Courts, not being a bird, cannot be present through the "question hour," may not, indeed, as a rule, be in his place before five o'clock.

Being there, under these disadvantageous circumstances, he upon occasion makes his presence felt. He has won a place among the six best debaters in the House of Commons. His speeches, whether prepared in advance or delivered on the spur of the moment, are of the simplest (also the rarest) class of debating. He opens with no exordium, and seldom illumines the conclusion of his argument with the glitter of a peroration. One habit endears him to the House and exhibits an example which in time, it is hoped, may bear fruit. His speeches in full-dress debates do not exceed three-quarters of an hour in delivery. For casual interposition in debate, twenty minutes amply serve. Within those limits of time, avoiding vain repetition and fruitless excursions into by-paths, he manages to compress more matter than some of his compeers, who might but shall not be named, fritter through narratives an audience yawn over for an hour-and-a-half.

Mr. Asquith found his opportunity when, after the General Election of 1892, he moved the Resolution that turned out Lord Salisbury's Government, and paved the way for the Home Rule Bill, and the dispersion of the Liberal Party into the wilderness. It

was a fine effort, compact, well-balanced, sparkling with polished sentences. Its drawback was a certain unmistakable smell of the lamp, an atmosphere of artificiality fatal to endeavour in the House of Commons.

"Very good," friendly critics said. "Excellent, capital, if a little ornate. But when it comes to the give-and-take of debate, you'll see that Asquith will break down."

He certainly did not. The only breakdown that follows on his intervention in debate happens to the argument and the position of the adversary. Whilst there have been few men whose uplifting was so sudden and so high, none have more brilliantly vindicated the choice. It used to be said of Mr. Gladstone that, whilst unerring in his judgment of a multitude, ever successful in the means adapted for swaying it, he was a poor judge of individual men. This dictum is shattered in the case of Mr. Asquith. Having been selected for the duty of moving a Vote of Censure, bound to dislodge the Government — an honour in analogous circumstances conferred upon the Duke of Devonshire at the outset of his career—it was taken for granted he would be included in Mr. Gladstone's Ministry. What was naturally expected was bestowal of an Under-Secretaryship. Members accustomed to routine in these matters stared incredulously when announcement was made that, at a single bound, he had been nominated Her Majesty's principal Secretary of State, with a seat in the Cabinet.

Mr. Asquith took his honours with a modesty that disarmed envy. The Home Office, an administration which by reason of contiguity looms largest in the eyes of the public, is perhaps the most difficult to hold. Within the memory of many living, its troubles dissolved Mr. Walpole in tears. Mr. Bruce, later consoled by a peerage, after being nearly run over by irate cabmen, succumbed to the resentment of the publicans, whom he wanted to get early to bed. Lord Llandaff will remember how the days of Mr. Henry Matthews were darkened, his nights made sleepless, by outbreaks of ill-considered popular sympathy with Mrs. Maybrick and Miss Cass. Mr. Asquith lived through the full term of his Home Secretaryship without once coming into angry collision with the emotionable man in the street.

The member for East Fife is one of the coming men in the Commons who have already arrived, and with respect to whom the problem is how much further they will go? It seems to be only a matter of temperament that might prevent him from reaching the ultimate goal, seizing the chief prize of political life. Intellectually he is a man of iron, a finely-tempered metal polished and pointed. To approach perfection, what is wanted is a little more blood. Mr. Asquith never lets himself go. The sublime passion with which Mr. Gladstone swayed humanity on the platform and in the House, is an emotion foreign to his nature. He has not the flexible manner of Mr. Balfour which, ordinarily sunlit, can (especially when conscious of being in the wrong) break up in tumult that looks uncommonly like passion.

In short, Mr. Asquith habitually addresses himself to the head of his audience, disregarding the existence of that more potent factor in popular movement, the heart. He would never make the fortunes of his Party on Blackheath, or overthrow an apparently impregnable Ministry by a campaign in Midlothian. Mr. Chamberlain, who recognises in Mr. Asquith the only foeman worthy of his steel in the present House of Commons, does not often address himself to the heart of his audience, as was Mr. Gladstone's use and wont. But I have in mind many instances, more especially in his speeches when he carried through the country the torch of the Unauthorised Programme, worthy of comparison with his late Chief. The earnestness and simplicity of these passages went straight home to the hearts of his audience, with potency not less than was wielded by the master.

But we can't have everything, and apart from the deficiency hinted at, Mr. Asquith has all the qualities that go to make a Prime Minister. A ready debater, a trained man of affairs, a born Parliamentarian, he has that impeccability of character, that lofty view of the duties of daily life, which are happily inseparable from the possibility of a First Minister of the British Crown.

Unlike Mr. Asquith, Mr. George Wyndham has the great advantage of Parliamentary parentage. The House of Commons, essentially clannish, likes to welcome the sons or grandsons of old members. There are some, curiously few in the present

House, who remember Percy Wyndham, Member for West Cumberland, through an uninterrupted quarter-of-a-century. Four years after the father retired the son came in as Member for Dover. The Irish Secretary has a more distant kinsman, whom the Irish members played for all he was worth—and as a gallant Irishman, a picturesque figure in a melancholy epoch of Irish history, Lord Edward Fitzgerald was worth a great deal. When Mr. Wyndham was first nominated to the Irish Secretaryship, Melancholy and Mr. MacNeill claimed him as their own. Omniscience is Mr. MacNeill's forte; history his foible. At the earliest possible moment short of moving the adjournment, in order to discuss the matter as one of urgent public importance, he dragged poor Lord Edward from an honoured grave and trotted him out for the edification of the House and the instruction of Mr. Flavin and Mr. Doogan, who heard of the hero for the first time. A descendant of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, Mr. MacNeill said at considerable length, was welcome at the Irish Office, where with the blood of the martyr in his veins he might be counted upon to make the Saxon sit up.

There was, of course, no serious expectation of this kind, even in the volcanic breast of the Member for Donegal. When it became clear that the descendant of Lord Edward Fitzgerald installed at the Irish Office maintained even-handed justice, sternly resisting the local tyranny of the League, bitter tears dropped upon the floor below the gangway opposite, and they wept over his degeneracy. Restrained in this country from the operation of boycotting and similar inquisitorial devices, the Irish Members find issue for overstrained feelings in fastening an opprobrious, not always directly relevant, nickname upon a prominent Englishman.

Thus Mr. Chamberlain, fighting to the last the Home Rule Bill of 1893, was hailed as "Judas," a historical personage whose connection with Home Rule was remote, and whose status as a landlord—he owned nothing beyond his Potter's Field—was not prominent. Earlier, at a time when Fenianism in Ireland took arms in hand and varied the houghing of poor neighbours' cattle by slaughtering an inoffensive Chief Secretary, the police in self-defence loaded their rifles. Mr. Forster, then Chief Secretary, whilst admitting the necessity, shrank from the natural consequence.



By way of compromise, he ordered that instead of ball cartridge, which would kill, the rifles should be loaded with buckshot, equally effective for dispersing a mob, with the minimum of danger to life. Straightway he was denounced as "Buckshot Forster," a name hissed in angry denunciation from every platform in Ireland.

Mr. Wyndham, who has a keen sense of humour, is not always able to preserve a grave countenance when hon. gentlemen below the gangway opposite, conscious of an audience on the other side of the Channel, irreverently rant. Like Lord Cross, on a famous occasion whilst he was still with us in the House of Commons, looking across to where the Chief Secretary sits, Irish Members sometimes "hear a smile." Accordingly the descendant of Lord Edward Fitzgerald is known in his kinsman's country as "The Smiling Assassin."

When on the formation of Lord Salisbury's third Administration, the name of the Member for Dover did not appear in the list, Mr. George Wyndham was not the only man who was surprised. From the day he took his seat, he set himself with industry and energy to the task of gaining the ear of the House. He took not infrequent part in debate, and evidently bestowed infinite pains on the preparation of his MS. Paradoxical as it may appear, that accounted for his limited success. The flow of his speech was well sustained; his diction admirable; his style scholarly; his voice good; his appearance attractive without suspicion of coxcombery. Somehow or other, the House did not care to hear him. There were one or two who recognised in the voluble well-dressed Oxonian the making of a Minister. But what were they among so many? The speeches were certainly too long and conveyed the impression of having been first heard in the privacy of the companionship of a cheval glass. However it be, Mr. Wyndham had the mortification of hearing an undertone of conversation whilst he rattled forth his polished periods, and saw the Chamber empty as he lingered in dalliance with the treasured peroration.

Like many another ambitious and gifted new Member, he found it not so easy as he thought to take the House by storm. Repulsed, disheartened, he for a time retired into comparative obscurity. It was only *pour mieux sauter*.

A personal friend of Mr. Arthur Balfour's, closely associated with him during the stormy period of his Chief-Secretaryship for Ireland, it seemed natural that when, in 1895, Lord Salisbury was firmly placed in power by the enormous majority gained at the poll, an Under-Secretaryship, or at least a Lordship of the Treasury, would be found for the First Lord's brilliant private secretary of coercion days. But there were Mr. Powell Williams, Mr. Jesse Collings and some others to be provided for, a preference that doubled the bitterness of exclusion. When, in 1889, Mr. Wyndham entered the House he, still private secretary to the Leader, sat immediately behind his chief. On the assembling of the new Parliament with a Conservative Ministry strengthened by alien blood from Radical sources, the Member for Dover, a free lance, took up his quarters in the camp below the gangway.

This seemed to forebode an attitude of hostility towards his former Chief, and other pastors and masters on the Treasury Bench. The hour was ripe for revolt. There were other persons besides the Member for Dover who resented what they regarded as the disproportionate measure of loaves and fishes allotted to Mr. Chamberlain's personal following. The Tory instincts of Mr. "Jemmy" Lowther were profoundly stirred by the amalgamation, the mingling, as he regarded it, of the dross of Radicalism with the pure gold of Conservatism.

There are few Members more respected, personally more popular, than the Yorkshireman who, after a troubled political career, was driven to take refuge in the Isle of Thanet. Mr. Lowther is precious to the twentieth century as being the last specimen left of the Tory who flourished in the time of Sir Robert Peel, and under the leadership of a Hebrew Radical, nightly wrestled with him over the Corn Laws. Mr. Lowther, fallen on evil days, suffers a Unionist Government only because any possible one of Liberal colour would be worse. But he is not restrained, rather is incited, by loyalty to eternal principles to criticise, even to censure, his leaders.

On the threshold of the Session of 1896, when the Parliament elected in the previous autumn assembled for the despatch of business, fresh provocation had been dealt to him. With the object of relieving the intolerable strain in Committee of Supply,



Mr. Balfour proposed certain variations of procedure that have in working proved invaluable. To an old Parliamentary hand, who entered the House more than thirty years earlier, this meddling with ancient ordinances was anathema. Watching Mr. Balfour touching with light hand the ark of the covenant of old-time Parliamentary procedure, Mr. Lowther shuddered, fearful lest there should befall his right hon. friend the fate of Uzzah, who, with equally good intention, put forth his hand to steady the ark "when they came to the threshing floor of Nacon."

Round Mr. Lowther in his attitude of revolt gathered, in addition to Mr. Wyndham, divers persons, such as Sir Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, beginning to recover from the state of coma into which he fell on discovering that Lord Salisbury, having presumed to form a new Ministry leaving out his former Civil Lord of the Admiralty, still kept at its head. Mr. Gedge migrated from above the gangway, where, on guard in the corner seat, Mr. "Tommy" Bowles scornfully regarded a Ministry that included Mr. Hanbury, and omitted the Member for King's Lynn. Mr. Bartley, who shared

their personal views, and Mr. T. W. Russell avowedly determined to hamper the Irish policy of a Ministry from which he had been excluded, took up the position of rearguard.

If Mr. Wyndham ever had the idea of going on the war-path in resentment of personal slight, he thought better of it. Soon came well-earned reward. In 1898, on a re-shuffling of the Ministerial cards, he was made Under Secretary for War. This was his opportunity, of which he promptly availed himself, justifying the expectation formed by a few personal friends (notably including Mr. Arthur Balfour) at the period of temporary failure. The time had come when the House must hear him. Abandoning his MS., casting from him as a cloak his earlier elaborately artificial manner of speech, he, representative in the Commons of the War Office, acquitted himself so well that two years later he was appointed to the difficult post of Irish Secretary with the Cabinet rank withheld from his predecessor. On this loftier platform he has shown that capacity for improvement, alike in matter and in manner, which opens up indefinite vista of further advancement.







white sheets. Yet I often thought afterwards of his talk that night as almost prophetic.

For a week things went on as usual. The scientific world was distraught with wonder, and a multiplicity of hypotheses to account for the action of the outer planets and the burning-up and disappearance of Phobos, but the average crowd went about their business without much concern.

Then the message from Mars came, and theory gave way to fact, and the popular indifference to a reign of terror that shook the fabric of civilisation to its base.

II. THE MESSAGE FROM MARS.

By what means the Martian intelligences despatched their tiny projectiles across the abyss of space with such accuracy we shall never know, nor shall we ever know what those intelligences were like. We only know that they must have been thousands of years in advance of us in knowledge and in power, almost god-like in the latter, and altruistic to a degree which our lower minds cannot comprehend. We only know that their message came in a number of small, metallic balls, which fell to earth like meteors on the night of August 5th and the following day.

So accurately timed and speeded were these messengers of the peril that they fell at nearly regular distances apart, and with such motion as to bring them to the ground without being fused by the friction of the atmosphere. Many, no doubt, fell into the seas and rivers and deserts; many have been found since in all kinds of out-of-the-way places; but one and all contained similar contents. These consisted of a tightly-rolled drum of a substance not unlike parchment and a few grains of a greyish powder.

Many of these metallic messengers fell into scientific hands on the morning of the 6th, and the whole world knew their purport on the 7th. Every telegraph wire carried the dread news; every paper had articles upon the subject; it was everywhere the chief topic of conversation. One fell into the lane at the back of Harrison's house, and was found accidentally by Harrison himself. We deciphered its meaning together the same afternoon, and wired it to the Press Agencies.

The day before I should have been amused at the idea of any ultra-terrestrial intelligences communicating with us, seeing that we could have no common basis of

agreement as to the meaning of signs, but the Martians compelled me to confess my dull wit. The method used was at once simple and convincing.

The first thing that came into view as we unrolled the drum of parchment was a marvellously accurate map of the Solar System, so intricate in detail as to force an exclamation of wonder and praise from Harrison at first sight. On this map Mars was marked with a peculiar sign, resembling a Maltese cross. A number of lines were drawn from Mars to the earth when each were at different points of their orbits—points which Harrison quickly marked with their respective dates—and, on the date on which we had witnessed the disappearance of Phobos, a line was drawn from the surface of Mars to the place of its small satellite, and for the satellite itself was substituted a splash of pale blue colour.

"Then it was the Martians who destroyed Phobos by some terrible projectile or exercise of force?" I cried.

Harrison nodded gravely.

"Yes. Evidently to attract our attention or to make an experiment. But look at this!—look at this! Do you see what it means?"

The unrolled drum now disclosed a map of much larger dimensions, on which the sun and some of the nearer stars were represented by tiny dots. We knew the sun again by the recurrence of the mark attached to it in the former map. Between the star *a* in Cassiopeia and our own sun, a small cloud of tiny objects (marked with a sign identical with that used to denote the Leonids and other meteor-streams of the Solar System) was shown, whose indicated orbit was directed straight to the sun. This cloud of meteors was marked with two distinctive signs.

"It means, I expect," said I, "that a large cloud of meteors is coming towards us from the direction of Cassiopeia, and so—but don't look scared, man—an extra grand display of celestial fireworks will be a compensation for the disappointment of two Novembers ago!"

My friend pulled himself together with a visible effort, but his voice trembled a little as he said:

"You don't see all I see in this. Do you think the Martians would have taken all this trouble just to warn us of the approach of an ordinary meteor swarm? No—this is a

warning of world-peril—so far as I can see, a sentence of death for all humanity.”

He paused a moment; then continued, growing calmer gradually:

“You will notice that the orbit of this meteor cloud does not start in Cassiopeia but is prolonged indefinitely beyond. This suggests that in order for the Martians to have traced its backward way so far it must be of a size and density unparalleled within our knowledge. Here is the next map conveying that precise information. Here is the Solar System again, bounded by a circular line; here is the meteor cloud with a circle of the same size drawn *within* it. Here is part of its orbit, marked off with a succession of regular ticks, each tick representing, I think, the distance travelled by the stream in a Martian year. A little calculation will settle that point. . . . Yes, I am right. And here is the last Martian year period marked off into ten minor divisions—they must use the decimal system on Mars—and this tells us that in six weeks from to-night the great stream will be passing our system, scorching us all to death by the heat evolved by the impact of its mass upon the sun. The sun will blaze out like the famous star in Corona Borealis did, and every living thing on earth will be roasted alive! Heaven help us, Milford!”

A half-jesting doubt of the truth of his deductions was upon my lips, but I looked at the maps again and saw that he was right, read thereon the sentence of death in indisputable language. The silent but eloquent dots and lines and marks seemed to dance before my eyes like fantastic figures of fire. I did not speak, and we unrolled the drum of parchment to the end.

III.—DAYS OF DESPAIR.

The twilight shadows were creeping across the floor of the study when we re-wound the parchment and looked straight into each other's haggard eyes. The further maps and diagrams confirmed and reiterated beyond dispute our worst conjectures, besides being an evident attempt to convey some more information to us—information which, at that time, we completely failed to comprehend.

On a series of Solar maps a great quantity of lines were drawn from Mars to the outer planets, at times and distances easily calculated to be those of the retardations which had so exercised the wonder of the astronomers. That these retardations had been

purposely achieved by the Martians, with a definite object in view, we had no room for doubt; that the Martians had solved the problem of the nature and control of gravitation, we were compelled to believe. All the indirect evidence of their existence and intelligence which had been so suddenly thrust upon us, enforced these points. But what bearing this knowledge, or the knowledge of the coming death, was expected to have upon earthly behaviour, we could not even dimly guess. That something more than a mere warning was intended, we felt sure; what it was, we had no idea.

We found our knowledge and our ignorance alike shared by all the competent students into whose possession the message came. One curious point was noted by all of us, though none then divined its true significance. On the map which represented the meteor stream infringing on the Solar System, the earth, Mars, and the four great outer planets, were shown to be in a direct line between the sun and centre of the great stream.

I parted from Harrison quietly—we felt that ordinary, commonplace sentences were all we dare use just then—and made my way home. It was a clear, warm night, already glowing with faint stars. They seemed to me as still, as steadfast, as prophetic of long endurance, as they have done to man for countless years, though I knew their seeming steadfastness was but a mask of mockery. As I turned the handle of the garden gate I remembered that I was due out that evening, and had no time to spare if I would be punctual. And hitherto I had been punctuality itself where Ethel was concerned. I hurriedly made myself fashionable, and went.

There came an interval in the evening's mirth when Ethel and I found ourselves alone on the balcony we knew so well. The stars were more numerous now, and shone radiantly. A few clouds were creeping up out of the west. The landscape spread out before us down to the river was covered with overlapping shadows. For a few minutes I debated with myself whether or not I should tell Ethel the awful news that would blight for her eyes, as it had done for mine, all the beauty of this quiet scene. If I did not tell her, she would read it in the papers to-morrow.

“Well, Jack,” she said at last, breaking the thread of my unpleasant cogitations, “have you turned miserly all at once?”

no sanction to man's anthropomorphic imaging of the Unknowable God.

The air was full of strange theories and queer suggestions. The intellect of all humanity was at work on the one absorbing problem. Up at Harrison's one evening, whither I had taken Ethel to see the Martian messages, we were talking of these things.

"Have you heard Schiaparelli's latest?" enquired Harrison, picking up a copy of the *British Mechanic* and glancing at a paragraph. "It's a daring idea, but has its merits. He calculates the sweep of the meteoric orbit from the portion shown to us on the Martian maps, and together with that, and the rate at which the stream is travelling, deduces the conclusion that it completes a circuit once in 20,000,000 of our years. That being so, the meteors must have passed through our system and enriched and superheated the sun 20,000,000 years ago, and at similar periods for who knows how far back? And you know Kelvin's estimate of the sun's present age—20,000,000 years. If Schiaparelli is right, the sun is constantly cooling and yet continually being revived by the impact of this immense stream of matter. This also suggests an argument in favour of the meteoritic origin of the Solar System, as against the old nebular hypothesis."

"It is a clever thought," said Ethel, "but then, you know, Kelvin's estimate is not a proved fact—it was seriously questioned by Proctor—and the ascertaining of a 20,000,000-year orbit is a very delicate matter indeed."

"Yes," said Harrison. "And another thing. The theory requires a very large body at or near the centre of the alleged orbit, and no visible star happens to be there. Of course, there may be one of the dark, burnt-out suns in that position—and equally, of course, there may not."

"Just so," said I. "And after all, it does not matter, because we shall never know."

"Of course not," said Harrison, gravely. "But if Professor Belmont's idea is right, *that* will matter a great deal."

"And that is —?"

"That the Martians intend to ward off the catastrophe by some means," my friend replied. "I will read you Belmont's summing-up from the *Scientific American*: 'That the Martians intended to convey to us more than the mere fact of the approach

of the meteor-stream, no one who has seen the messages doubts. That this something more is an intimation that they will endeavour to prevent the disaster, seems to me equally beyond dispute. We know that they are retarding the outer planets—and now the earth and Venus and Mars itself—so as to bring all the planets in a right line between the centre of the sun and the centre of the meteor-stream at the time it will pass through and around the Solar System. On the map which conveys this information we find lines drawn from Mars to the outer planets, each line marked with a sign, and terminating in a sign, identical with the signs on the map marking the destruction of Phobos. The one spectroscopic observation of that destruction which we possess shows that a mass of pure hydrogen of immense volume was suddenly fired. This cannot have been sent from Mars; we can only account for it by supposing that the Martians—who, we know, can control gravitation—know the nature of the primeval element out of which all our so-called elements are formed, and can transmute these "elements" at their will; that, in fact, by means incomprehensible to us, they dissolved the whole mass of Phobos into incandescent hydrogen.

"The conclusion seems forced upon one that at the instant of impact they will similarly dissolve Neptune, Uranus, Saturn, and Jupiter, thus opposing the central portion of the meteor-stream with a succession of flaming hydrogen shields, in passing through which the meteors will be fused, and dissipated into cosmic dust. That the grains of grey powder in the Martian messages were intended for us to prove their accuracy with, seems convincingly shown by the fearful explosions which have taken place in the laboratories, because after each explosion the presence of a large body of hydrogen has been detected in the vicinity.

"Thus much appears certain. It is too daring to go further and affirm that the last map of the series suggests the possible self-destruction of Mars (and of the earth also, we being supposed to have learned the nature of the grey powder) should the hydrogenising of the outer planets prove insufficient? With the Martian message before me, I affirm that such is my belief."

"Feasible, is it not?" added Harrison.

"Quite," said I, "except the last suggestion. That seems too terrible, unless we

more violent excesses of frivolity, debauchery and crime than even Rome knew in her most degenerate days. The lower class of theatres and music halls were filled nightly with reckless crowds; and despite the efforts of the military and police, forcible robberies and other worse deeds were enacted daily in the dark corners of great cities and on desolate country roads.

Fortunately the great mass of the people, especially in the stolid, English-speaking countries, contained themselves admirably, neither evincing any spirit of superhuman heroism nor of sub-human despair. The sky was black enough, no doubt, but plenty of time for "the panic of wild affright" when the storm burst. There was yet a gleam of hope shining.

The moment of contact between the meteor-stream and Neptune arrived at last. For some nights previously we had fine displays of shooting stars—the advance guard of the great group—which struck fresh terror into the minds of the ignorant, and now was the time to verify Belmont's hypothesis. Harrison and I were alone in the observatory once more, waiting in the small hours for the sign that should confirm what we both believed.

Harrison was at the eye-piece; I was wondering why, on so clear a night, we had seen fewer meteors than on the two previous evenings. Suddenly my friend uttered an exclamation of relief and seized my arm.

"Look—quick! It is true! The Martians are at work!"

I glanced through the dark tube, and saw where the tiny point of Neptune should have shone, a small cloud of intensely vivid light—the light of incandescent hydrogen. Belmont's reading of the Martian message was correct; the intelligences that inhabited the ruddy planet, superior to us in intellect and in power, were fighting the great peril. Knowing by means we cannot even guess that the earth held intelligences also, they had warned us of the peril and of their attempt to avert it. The thought, although familiar enough now, came home to me with fresh force, with an almost staggering greatness—was almost too large for a human brain to grasp, otherwise than as a wildly-impossible dream. Yet it was true.

I moved aside for Harrison to look once more, but in a little over ten minutes the cloud dimmed and disappeared. How many millions of meteors had been fused into

cosmic dust in their headlong rush through that shield of flaming hydrogen? How many millions came after them, with shape and motion unimpaired? How many millions?—how many trillions of trillions!

We busied ourselves with the telegraph as the cloud vanished, sending and receiving news. We learnt that the spectroscope showed the flame of Neptune's destruction to be the flame of almost pure hydrogen, and that it was of immense volume. News of the destruction of Uranus came from the European observatories some days later, with the determination of the speed of the great meteor-stream and the fixing of the dates when it would reach the earth and the sun respectively. Saturn's annihilation was invisible everywhere, owing to heavy clouds, but the hydrogenising of the mighty mass of Jupiter was visible to the naked eye. To Harrison and me, sweeping the sky with the telescope, the sight was one never to be forgotten.

A straggling meteor shot through the field of view a moment prior to the predicted time, and the luminous trail in its wake had scarcely vanished when the huge globe of the giant planet seemed to melt into nothingness before our gaze. A moment's blank. Then, in place of the round orb, a swiftly expanding cloud of flame shone, glowing as with the sustained blast of a furnace, shooting out fierce red tongues of fire round all its jagged and increasing circumference, glittering with a thousand points of yet intenser flame, as though riddled through and through with a torrent of stars.

The cloud of flame endured for more than half-an-hour, and in every second of that time it was swallowing in its capacious maw myriads upon myriads of groups of those restless, hurrying enemies of ours, fusing them with the furnace heat of friction into harmless dust. The grey dawn stole across the sky shortly after the cloud became invisible. We felt a thrill of hope now that we were sure those Martian intelligences were fighting so bravely for us and for themselves. Yet whether we were saved we did not know. The peril was not yet past. The stress of suspense was not yet over.

VI.—THE SUPREME SACRIFICE.

It was late in the afternoon, and the whole sky was growing dull with the approach of twilight, when Ethel and I walked together to my friend's house. She could not rest at

home, she said, waiting to know the end, and I was more than willing that she should be with me in the moment when the nature of that end should be known for good and all. After that supreme moment, whether the verdict was life or death, I had promised to return home with her. In the last hours we would be together.

On our way we met and passed many people. Their faces reflected all the shades of fear, from dim doubt to wild terror. Some walked defiantly, some furtively, some with affected unconcern, but we did not see one face that betokened real carelessness or suggested real composure. One group we passed at the corner of a street were indeed singing and praying and preaching loudly, and called to us to join them, but the scared expression in their eyes—red with want of sleep, with long and anxious vigils at bedroom windows, repeated studies of the dangerous sky—belied the complacency they professed and offered. Sadly shaking off the nervous hands that one zealot laid upon us, we hurried on.

Harrison and his wife greeted us briefly but sincerely, and the four of us went straight to the garden seat near the open door of the observatory. If the calculations of the astronomers were correct, we should receive news of the great issue from Greenwich in a quarter of an hour. As Greenwich time is about five hours in advance of American Eastern time, we should have to wait that period for a distinct observation of Mars ourselves. As the minutes were counted off and the telegraph instrument gave no sign, the tension drew its cords tightly around us.

Save for a few drifting clouds, the sky was dark and clear and cold; the air was still; the whole world about us seemed plunged into waiting silence. We were each loth to break the spell of that hush, and sat apart, busy with our own thoughts. I remember that I was thinking something like this: The Martians, besides having control of gravitation, must have means of knowing the total amount of matter in the meteor cloud. Knowing that, and how much of it they have destroyed already, they will know whether what yet remains is sufficient to raise the sun's heat beyond the point fatal to life. They must also know if the hydrogenising of their own planet would avert the calamity, and so save the earth and the inner planets. If Mars is hydrogenised, it will mean that such is the case; if he

is not, it will mean that even Martian intelligence is beaten and that only universal death remains. I also remember wondering whether any of the Martians would try to escape from the ruin of their world and come to earth, as Wells's Martians did.

I was roused from my reverie by Harrison shutting his chronometer with a snap. The time had expired and the wire had not spoken. Mars yet existed.

"We will wait a little longer," said Ethel, very quietly, but with pale face. "The calculations may be in error or the sky cloudy in Europe. Until we have seen Mars with our own eyes we will not go home. And it may be that the danger is really past—that the meteors have already been reduced in number below the danger point."

"That might be so, but I do not think the Martians, knowing the approximate mass of the meteors, would have sent us any message in that case. For my part I go further than Belmont now. I believe that they foresaw the need of self-sacrifice and contemplated it from the first, only sending us the message to suggest the same self-destruction to us, in the event of their calculations proving in error or the hydrogen shields not fusing sufficient of the meteors. The balance of mass between death and life for us may be—I think it is—very fine now, and we may yet see what we want. They may be delaying their own destruction because of a concentration of the meteors in the tail of the stream. We will wait, as Miss Holroyd suggests, until we have seen Mars himself."

We waited, and the sky darkened swiftly. An hour later a brilliant meteor shot across the sky. After a short interval it was followed by another, and they by others, until the heavens seemed riven by myriads of lances of fire.

"The meteors—the harbingers of death!" cried Ethel, her hands locked in silent prayer. We looked at each other for a few moments, then back at the sky. It held us fascinated. The meteors—evidently a portion of the great stream which had escaped the hydrogen shields—came scattering to right and left from that point on the horizon where Mars would rise. East and west, north and south, they spread; the sky was full of their brief shinings. It has been said by those who remember the great Leonid showers of 1866-7, that those displays were almost as nothing compared with the terribly grand vision of a hurricane of stars that blazed



touched me on the arm. She then drew me within, closing the door softly after me.

"You will catch cold, Jack," she said. "And as the sky is clear of clouds, and the number of the meteors is diminishing, we shall soon have Mars in the field of the telescope."

I laughed, rather bitterly. With a grim sense of incongruous humour, I remarked that there had never been a finer chance of ignoring the laws of health, especially with regard to chills, as we should all, no doubt, be hot enough soon. Ethel put her hand over my mouth without answering, and I sat down. I shall never forget her calm courage in those nerve-straining hours.

Then Harrison slowly swung the tube round and adjusted the eyepiece according to calculation, and for a few minutes peered at the field of view. In silence his wife and then Ethel succeeded him at the instrument; in silence I, too, received upon my optic nerve those waves of ruddy light, which, having traversed forty-million miles of vibrant ether, told me Mars yet lived. Mars lived—the meteor stream was then too vast for even Martian intelligence to reduce to impotence. Mars lived—and therefore it and Earth, with the minor planets that yet remained to the relentless sun, must on the morrow die. Was this, then, the end of all—the Purpose of the Ages?

At that moment I heard, though faintly, the sound of feet on the road outside, then voices pitched in the key of despair, then a woman's choking sob. All suddenly the horror of it struck me as it had never done before. With a sharp cry I left the telescope and staggered to a chair, and out of the dim shadows under the galvanised dome my imagination fashioned a vision of the World's Death.

I saw the countless meteors still shooting, incandescent, through the air, and knew that when one fell to earth in dust ten billion billion more sped on towards the all-compelling, all-consuming, superheated sun. I saw fierce spots on his golden disc, and new red-flaming prominences around his rim, as though, insatiate, he reached out greedy arms towards the stricken planets. I saw his colour change to a fiercer red, and felt the scorching flood of his heat grow more and more intense, from tropical dawns to noons in which no men could live, save in dungeons and cellars and caves. I watched the temperate zone, fast followed by the tropic

as that was pursued by the *burning zone*, recede to north and south, even to the shuddering Poles. I saw the Alpine hills grow moist, and the late snow run over and down them in warm, black torrents; saw the glaciers sweat and slip and slide, and, melting as they slid, descend with roar and ruin into flooded valleys. I saw grass go brown, and drop in dust where it did not burn. I saw the sea bubble and boil, and rise in clouds of scalding steam.

Finally, I beheld a charred and blackened earth—a world in which there was no life, neither of man nor beast, nor creeping nor flying thing, nor tree nor herb of any kind—a world of heat and darkness and utter desolation.

And then the vision passed; it could not have lasted many seconds. All was still and cold in the observatory. Ethel was looking at me, but not curiously. Harrison and his wife were looking at each other. Feeling that I must do something, that inaction would be dangerous, I once more put my eye to the telescope. I had not been watching Mars for twenty seconds when the ruddy planet melted away into the sky around him, showing again swiftly as a vast, expanding cloud of flame, shotted through and through with a myriad points of yet more vivid fire. A minute longer I remained at the tube, to make sure my eyes had not deceived me; then I told the others.

The cloud of consuming hydrogen lasted long enough for all of us to see it several times. After it faded, and whilst we three talked wildly and gladly, like doomed prisoners suddenly set free, Harrison's fingers were busy with the telegraph.

It was true, after all; quite true. Mars had died so that the earth *could* live. Those unknown intelligences who had warned us of the peril had made the last supreme sacrifice to avert the full fury of the great assault. It is a thought that even yet passes human comprehension, yet it is true—that a world has sacrificed itself for a world, a race of intelligent beings has blotted itself out of existence in order that another and less-intellectual race might live.

I need only add that the meteor display continued one night more and then ceased abruptly; that the approaching winter was very mild and the succeeding summer almost tropical; that the earth is now the largest planet of the Solar System; and that I married Ethel within the month.







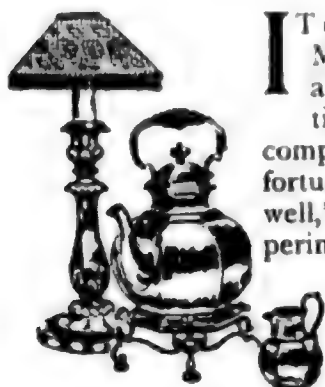


* THE DOINGS OF VIGOROUS DAUNT: BILLIONAIRE.

AN EXPERIMENT WITH POVERTY.

By AMBROSE PRATT.

Illustrated by STANLEY L. WOOD.



I T once pleased my master, Mr. Vigorous Daunt, to anticipate in his imagination a calamitous and complete destruction of his fortune. "It would be as well," he declared, "to experiment beforehand with our merely natural resources in order to discover how we are likely to fare in the struggle for existence, if by some fatal stroke we should be once and for all deprived of those stores of wealth with which Providence has been hitherto so kind as to entrust me."

The little brown man's idea was to lock up his cheque book and mine, to wander forth into the world without a penny in either of our pockets, and thenceforth to trust to our native ingenuity, or the labour of our hands, for the furnishing of our wants. Now, above all things, I am a lover of comfort, of that peculiar state of ease with dignity which so appealed to the good old Latin philosophers. It is true that I delight in occasionally spicing even so excellent a dish with a dash of danger, adventure or excitement, yet I contend that even this disposition is philosophical, for a continual diet of partridge spoils the most perfect palate. Besides, never in my moments of deepest *ennui* nor in my wildest dreams had I contemplated the voluntary relinquishment of those conditions which most render life endurable in order to indulge in the vicarious and comfortless existence of a pauper.

It was, however, quite in vain that I argued, pleaded and protested; equally in vain that I opposed my experience to his imaginings. I had known what it was to starve; to look for work and find none; to beg and be refused. Mr. Daunt had only experienced the pangs of

hunger through accident. Nevertheless, my description of the horrors of poverty merely served to inflame his purpose.

"What you say, Granville," he cried at last, "decides me. To tell you the bare truth, I am sick to death of being a billionaire. If we encounter a tithe of the hardships you paint so feelingly, perhaps I shall be reconciled to my lot."

My last expedient was to quarrel with him. His answer was to assume his grandest manner and invite me to choose between his service and my own. But here my affection prevailed and I sacrificed myself upon the altar of friendship. That evening we started from the Colonnade Hotel on foot, clad in our oldest clothes, and absolutely penniless. Fortunately it was summer, for we were obliged to spend the night under a hedge, some twelve miles on the road to Dover, having been refused a lodging at the last farmhouse that we passed. In the early morning, while lying awake and blinking lazily up at the paling stars, I conceived a brilliant idea, which I proceeded to exploit with all the address I could command immediately my master awoke.

"Good morning, sir," said I.

"Good-morning, Granville," he yawned. "Eh! By Jove, I never slept better in my life. How did you fare?"

"Pretty well. I've been thinking."

"Thinking. This is not the time for thinking, lad. Look about you—see that field of gorgeous poppies—the rising sun—the pretty farmhouse—that cow yonder—and the sheep browsing in that covert. Why, bless my soul, I feel young, a boy again!"

"I have an idea!" I announced, dismissing with a glance the beauties of nature. "A brilliant idea!"

He turned to me. "Will your idea earn us a meal? I am as hungry as a horse."

"It might—who knows?"

"Let us hear it, then."

"Mr. Daunt, during the last five years in which I have served you as secretary and companion——"

"And friend," put in my master.

"Thank you, sir. Well, during those five years, you have conferred many benefits upon mankind at large, but a great many more upon individuals. Let me see," (I counted on my fingers), "there is Valentine Peterson, the mortgage on whose property you released, he lives in Hampshire; Greville Sands, whose defalcations you made good, he manages a bank at Margate; John Ilby, whose gambling debts you paid to save him being posted, he lives at Cowes; Edgar Vale, whom you married to a princess, he lives in Dresden; Lord Peter Auld, whose life you saved in Algiers, he lives at Cannes; James——"

"Hold on!" broke in my master. "We'll take the list as told—what of them?"

"Just this. Would it not be a fine thing to present ourselves in turn to these people, who owe you so much, as a pauper! To pretend to them that you have lost your all, and are obliged to cast yourself and me upon their *gratitude*. Hey, what do you think of my plan? Here is an adventure for us—a magnificent adventure. Consider how diverting it will be to discover their true characters. How delightful it will be for you subsequently to reward perhaps those we prove worthy; to despise and confound those who display ingratitude."

Mentally I had resolved that if I could manage it all would prove openly hospitable at all events, whatever their private dispositions, for to speak truly I was already heartily sick of my master's latest freak. Conceive my dismay when Mr. Daunt, whose flashing eyes had led me to suppose that he was smitten with my plan, presently shook his head and replied,

"It is a good plan, but look behind it, Rupert Granville. There is little charity in it, lad, but much malice. We know, all intelligent people know, that the bulk of mankind is ungrateful. Why should we then unnecessarily seek to confirm our convictions? Only ill would come of it. No, we'll just keep on our way. Ah, by jove, there's a man standing at the door of yonder farmhouse. Let's try to win our breakfast." In a second he was through the hedge and off. I followed leisurely, muttering such expressions as usually occur to the lips of fowlers when their snares have caught but failed to hold their prey. I foresaw an indefinite existence of toil and discomfort, and the only hope that remained to me was in the chance of an adventure turning up which might interest my master sufficiently to abstract him from his purpose.

It would occupy weeks of space and reams of paper to detail our doings of the next two months. I shall content myself by observing that my gloomy forebodings were realised. We

tramped the southern counties of England as far as Portsmouth, living from hand to mouth, often working like labourers for our bread, sometimes going for long periods ahungred, frequently sleeping in the open fields for lack of better lodging. Mr. Daunt endured all the hardships we encountered with such indomitable cheerfulness and patience, that I, for very shame's sake, dared not repine before him, though in secret I cursed his folly every hour. Yet I was obliged to respect and admire him as time passed more and more, for every day in providing for our needs he displayed some fresh evidence of those extraordinary qualities of intelligence and will power, which had made him, even before the meridian of life, one of the richest inhabitants of the universe. Moreover, during the jaunt, he appeared to exercise some species of restraint upon his matchless vanity. I do not mean to say that he was less vain, but his manner was less aggressive than formerly, nor did he require me to feed him constantly with flatteries. Had he done so, indeed, I fear that I should have openly revolted. Perhaps he perceived this and thereby again instanced his marvellous mental penetration, for I am certain he did not wish to lose my company.

At Portsmouth I raised the wind to the tune of three half-crowns, by matching my skill with the rifle against that of a country bumpkin at a shooting gallery, and with this money we crossed the Channel in a fishing smack, landing penniless in France. There we fared much better than in England. This was not, I believe, because Frenchmen are more charitable than Englishmen, but because they are generally speaking more credulous and vain, and my master with an almost diabolical skill played on the weakness of all whom he thought might serve our ends.

Our movements ruled for the most part by the purest chance, we came at last to a little coast town of Brittany, which, for various reasons, I shall call by the fictitious name—Cyprés. This place we entered on a balmy twilight evening in September. It was a pretty town—nicely planted with trees, most of which were cypress. Its houses were quaintly constructed, and they seemed centuries old. The streets were filled with chattering and smiling people, clad in gala costumes, and the joy-bells were ringing right merrily, for the whole town was *en fête*. Why, I could not guess, for the day was neither a saint's day, nor any great anniversary that I remembered.

Our finances were for the moment quite respectable. We had, I believe, almost forty francs between us—the combined fruits of a week's toil in a peasant's vineyard, and one night's gambling in a tavern. I was unusually good-humoured, in consideration of a prospective good dinner and comfortable bed, for it was our intention to put up at a hotel. But my master



"Really, sir," I muttered, "it would be pleasanter to dine outside."

"With those cursed bells going!" he answered angrily. "Bah, even here it is bad enough. Mahommed never spoke more truly than when he called a bell the Devil's musical instrument."

Though looking at my master, I could not help observing that both the gentlemen, upon whose privacy we had intruded, started at these words—started violently indeed. One of them got immediately to his feet and surveyed us, upon his face a curious expression of mingled hesitation, doubt, expectancy and pride. He was tall, elegantly dressed and of noble bearing; unmistakably an aristocrat. His eyes were very large and very black, and they protruded in the fashion so admired by the French. His nose was long and aquiline; his chin was strong, almost too predominant; his forehead square and broad. Altogether he seemed a person of uncommon character and consequence. At first he made a gesture as if to address my master, but stopping short stood biting the ends of his short black moustache, a picture of haughty embarrassment and irresolution.

The little brown man looked him fully in the face, and I perceived in his swiftly kindling eyes the dawn of some esoteric purpose. He had evidently scented an adventure and his quick intelligence was wide awake. He made presently a slight obeisance to the standing gentleman. His *vis-a-vis* nodded and shrugged his shoulders with a gesture that was condescending, yet contemptuous.

"Well?" said my master.

"You spoke of Mahommed!"

"True!"

"Are you——?" the gentleman paused.

"I am I," responded Mr. Daunt.

The gentleman looked him up and down, his glance lingering disdainfully on my master's worn apparel. "I expected—I confess—some-one slightly more presentable," he muttered rudely.

Mr. Daunt flushed crimson. "It is unsafe to judge by appearances," he retorted. "Until you spoke, I mistook you for a gentleman!"

The gentleman started back as though he had been struck. "I am the Marquis de St. Hilaire!" he cried, frowning blackly.

My master shrugged his shoulders. "In that case, m'sieur, I am at your service!"

The Marquis, with a perceptible effort, controlled his rage. "You come from Paris?" he demanded.

"Not immediately. I have travelled far."

"So! You were followed then?"

"No—I did not wish to be. No one has guessed at my identity. Else perhaps—" he shrugged again.

"Who is your companion?"

"My secretary."

The Marquis laughed ironically. "So! you have a secretary! Well, so much the better!"

II.

Vigorous Daunt, with perfect coolness, prepared to eat his dinner, which was at that moment brought in by a waiter. When the fellow had departed, however, the Marquis again demanded our attention.

"You have not yet paid your respects to Monsieur!" he cried sharply.

Mr. Daunt looked up and glanced at the Marquis's male companion, whom he gravely saluted. "Monsieur" was a short, rotund gentleman attired in regulation riding dress. His countenance was bloated and sensual, but yet self-possessed and intelligent. He possessed a pair of prominent, pale grey eyes, a large flabby nose, a high bold forehead, a weak indulgent mouth, and a pointed chin which was almost buried in rolls of fat. He returned my master's bow with an enchanting smile that lighted up his face and transfigured his expression. "A glass of wine with you, M. Lebeau," said he with marked condescension.

Mr. Daunt bowed respectfully, and raised his glass. "To your good health, Monsieur."

"To the success of our enterprise, M. Lebeau. May your eye be as true, your hand as cunning, as we have been induced to believe." Monsieur spoke so commandingly and with a demeanour so dignified that I at once concluded he must be a great personage.

My master's manner confirmed my impression. He drank his wine and waited seemingly for permission to resume his meal.

Monsieur saw, and said smilingly, "Eat, M. Lebeau. After dinner we have much to do."

"Thanks," muttered Mr. Daunt. Without more ado we fell to and made a hearty meal.

The Marquis and Monsieur meanwhile conversed together in low tones, and the lady, their companion, gazed as ever silently into her plate, seemingly sunk in profound and melancholy thought. Before we had finished I discovered that I was regarding this young woman with much sympathy and curiosity. Her condition seemed so sad, and so contemptuously was she, in spite of her beauty, neglected by the others, who never once addressed her, nor sought to persuade her into tasting her untouched meal.

My master gave me a sign with his eyes at last and we both stood up. Monsieur and the Marquis followed our example.

"Are you ready?" demanded the Marquis.

"At your service," replied Mr. Daunt.

The Marquis turned to the lady. "Come, mademoiselle," he said, his voice harsh and peremptory. "The time has come when you must put a period to your folly. M. Lebeau, you will take charge of Mademoiselle de St. Hilaire; I need scarcely remind you that you



Mr. Daunt frowned. "I beg you to listen to me. I am not what I seem. You doubtless imagine that I am your brother's instrument. In that case, you share in his mistake. I am Vigorous Daunt, the billionaire; my friend here is Captain Rupert Granville. We are English gentlemen amusing ourselves by touring France."

"Ah!" cried the lady, gazing at him spell-bound.

The little man continued. "Our fortune—nay, say rather destiny—led us this evening to the inn from which we have so recently set forth. A chance remark of mine, concerning Mahommed, evidently induced your brother and his companion to believe me someone—some agent or servant personally unknown to them, but whom they expected to meet and discover by the use of that expression. In a spirit of adventure I allowed them to persist in their mistake. Now I rejoice that I so acted, for I divine that you are the victim of some piece of tyranny, and I believe that Providence has sent me to your aid. Mademoiselle, our services are at your disposal."

He made her a very courtly reverence.

The lady had listened like one in a dream; as he concluded, she gasped for breath.

"My God!" she cried in a broken voice. "Ah! If I could but believe you. But no, it is impossible. This is one of St. Hilaire's designs, the most cursed, the cruellest trick he has played me yet."

"Trust me, mademoiselle. I am incapable of injuring a woman. Confide in me and I shall help you to the utmost of my power."

The lady pressed her hands to her forehead. "Trust! Confide!" she cried, her voice ringing with scorn. "That is Henry's parrot cry."

"Mademoiselle," said my master, "you believe that I am a person called Lebeau; now this man, what would his profession be—a gaoler, a spy?"

"An assassin—a paid assassin!" cried the lady, and throwing out her hands she gazed at us distractedly.

My master nodded. "So," he said. "But then a paid assassin would of necessity be a reduced and desperate creature, a man sunk in vice and crime. Do I look such a one? Does my friend here?"

The lady's eyes fastened on us piercingly. On meeting mine the colour crept into her pale cheeks, perhaps because of my too ardent gaze. She was silent.

"Such a one, moreover, would be poor," said Mr. Daunt. "Now look you here!"

With a sudden movement he rolled up the sleeve covering his left arm, and displayed to us, just above the elbow, a leathern band encircling his arm, constructed in the manner of those service watch bracelets which army officers wear upon their wrists. Instead, however, of a watch, there peeped out of the

opening in Mr. Daunt's bracelet, the face of an enormous ruby that glimmered at us through the dusk of the carriage with a wonderful uncanny light of intelligence, like a gleaming blood-coloured eye.

"The Gnaga-Gna!" I muttered. It was the ruby which had come to my master's hands in the remarkable manner I have already described.* It was supposed to possess magical properties, and my master had religiously worn it, from the day it had first come into his possession, as an amulet, perhaps induced thereto by some superstition.

"This ruby," said he, "is worth an emperor's ransom. Now consider, Mademoiselle, would any man in his senses possessing it hire himself out as an assassin?"

The lady shook her head. "Is it a ruby?" she asked suspiciously.

My master shrugged his shoulders and turned down his sleeve. "It is hard to convince you, but perhaps you will propose a test yourself!"

The lady looked out of the window. We were then skirting a huge craggy mound of rocks, which, topped with a grove of pines, rose abruptly from the roadside. "Yonder is the chateau—my prison-house," she said.

We strained our eyes, but could perceive no form of human dwelling.

"Where?" I asked.

The lady looked me in the eyes. "It is behind that hill, monsieur," she answered softly. For a long while there was silence between us, but at last I summoned courage to speak.

"If it is your prison-house, why need we go there?" I demanded.

"Because my husband will be there; perhaps even now he is awaiting me!"

"Your husband!" I gasped.

She gazed at me as if lost to all other considerations, her lips a little parted and her eyes curiously glowing. And yet there was no trace of coquetry about her. She was beautiful, but not strictly so, perhaps, if regularity of feature be taken as a guide of beauty. But her countenance had an extraordinary power of expression; the features were mobile and marvellously sensitive. Her hair was dark gold, almost auburn; her brows beneath were broad and low, her nose was straight and shapely, though perhaps too small; her lips were fine and apt to curl with pride; and her face was of a pure oval shape. In form she was generously fashioned, tall, lithe, full-bosomed; and her dress was rich and elegant and fitted like a glove.

I repeated the words, "Your husband."

"My husband that is, and my husband that is to be!" said the lady gently, and, speaking,

* See the story, "The Ruby and the Cat," published in the LONDON MAGAZINE, September, 1902.

she removed her eyes. The charm was broken. I started as though awakened from a trance and saw my master curiously watching me. Moreover, the carriage had stopped. A feeling of wild unreality possessed me. The door was opened by a footman. Scarcely knowing what I did, I sprang from the carriage and assisted the lady to alight. Mr. Daunt followed us. We stood in a small quadrangle enclosed by the walls of a massive castellated building, fully a hundred feet in height. We had evidently entered through a great portcullised archway which was now closed. The quadrangle was illuminated by a number of lanthorns resting on the paving stones about us. Two or three grooms were busily engaged attending to the horses. Before us, twenty paces off, a great double door stood wide open; beyond was a fairy scene of light, and there came to us therefrom a hum of voices, shouts, laughter and sounds of revelry.

I said to myself, "This is all a dream." Then I was thrilled by the lady's hand that of a sudden clutched my arm. She was shuddering, shuddering violently; her face was ghastly pale. I was about to speak, but my master interposed.

"Madame," he said in a low, stern voice, "there is yet time for you to confide in us." It was true, for apparently none of the revellers within was aware of our arrival.

The lady glanced at my master, then turned to me. "Monsieur," she cried, her voice intense and passionate, "swear to me by God, by your mother's soul and your own, that you are not deceiving me."

I bowed low. "Madame," I replied, "I swear," and I lifted my hand.

"Good! then I shall trust you."

"And me," queried Mr. Daunt, his face dark with jealousy. The little brown man had never played second lead before, and his vanity was wounded to the quick.

"My master," I said softly. "Madame, Mr. Daunt is my master."

She looked at him and smiled. She gave him her hand, and his frown fled under the magic of her smile. "My friends," she murmured, "I have great need of you. But come, we cannot linger here. Remember I am your prisoner. I shall precede you now to the apartments which my brother has kindly placed at my disposal. Come, messieurs, guard me well."

III.

Mademoiselle de St. Hilaire approached the chateau and we followed her closely. We entered a blazing hall, where, round a table, twenty gentlemen were seated at their wine. They sprang to their feet on our entrance and bowed before the lady. She passed them without acknowledgment, her face set like stone. We marched behind her like

soldiers. She led us to a staircase, which we climbed, thence along a dusky corridor to a wide and stately reception chamber, brilliantly illuminated. Here was a table spread with spirits and liqueurs. Madame cast herself into a chair, and directed us to close the door. At a sign I brought her a glass of wine. She took off her hat, and, casting it aside, drank deeply of the wine. We stood before her waiting for her to speak, our nerves on edge.

Presently she began. "Listen, gentlemen. Four years ago, I, Helene de St. Hilaire, then a girl of twenty, married, at the command of my brother, the great banker M. de Brianceau, who is, as doubtless you are aware, a millionaire, the richest and nigh the oldest man in France. My wishes were not consulted in the matter. It was for my brother to command, for me to obey. I obeyed him, and since that time I have resided with M. de Brianceau in his Chateau de Rougy, which is situated some fifteen miles from this spot. Early this morning, in answer to an urgent message from my brother, I set out from my husband's house and found him awaiting me in the town of Cyprés, at a tavern where you subsequently encountered me. My brother, who had feigned an illness in order to entrap me within his power, on my arrival decoyed me to his room and there he kept me a close prisoner until an hour before you came. There he made known to me his designs. Ah, gentlemen, even yet I tremble to disclose to you his villainy." She paused and gazed at my master, then at me.

"You may trust us, madame," I muttered.

She shivered. "I must, monsieur," she said, then crimsoned because of the ungracious words. "Listen!" she cried, and proceeded in a burst of words. "You must know that my brother is deeply engaged in politics. He is full of ambition, his heart knows no remorse. It is his purpose to change again the government of this poor country; those gentlemen below are of his counsels, his co-conspirators. They have great names, great offices. Some of them are members of the State, chiefs of the Army. They are very wicked men. They wish to disturb the peace of the world, to give a king to France."

Mr. Daunt and I stared into each other's eyes. "Monsieur——!" I gasped. My master nodded. Madame de Brianceau interpreted our looks.

"I see, gentlemen, that you have guessed the secret of Monsieur's identity. Let us not name him. He it is whom my brother seeks to put upon a throne. But to do this money is needed, much money. Monsieur is comparatively poor, my brother has eaten up his fortune, his fellow conspirators have little to lose, everything to gain. In order, therefore, to obtain funds necessary to carry out the *coup d'état* they contemplate, my brother has resolved to sacrifice



whom you, M. Daunt, now personate. Ah, how could I ever have thought you were really he?" My master blushed to the eyes. "This man, Lebeau, was to have been the instrument of my husband's murder. The plot was and is this: my brother and Monsieur, after they left me in your charge, have ridden over to the Chateau Rougy. On some pretext they will induce M. de Brianceau to accompany them here. They will arrive, if they ride fast, by midnight. M. de Brianceau will be given a glass of drugged wine. While he sleeps in his chair, Lebeau—the vile Lebeau (thank God you are not he—thank God for the happy chance which put the word Mahommed in your mouth). Ah! while my husband sleeps, Lebeau, who is supposed to have escaped from prison—Lebeau the housebreaker, the forger, the burglar, the informer (so my brother has described him)—will descend the stairs and slay my husband with a dagger. My brother and three of his friends will witness the vile deed. Subsequently they will swear Lebeau killed my husband in an encounter, that he dashed through their ranks and escaped. They will scour the country for him."

"But," cut in my master, "the servants who brought us here—the coachman and footman, the grooms without?"

"Are in the plot—they are all royalists, monsieur. Well, as I said when you interrupted me, my brother will scour the country for Lebeau; he will offer a reward for his arrest. But, meanwhile, Lebeau, with his pockets full of gold, will be steaming away from France in Monsieur's yacht, which is lying now in the bay beneath this castle, awaiting Monsieur and Lebeau. Well, gentlemen, what think you of my brother's plans?"

"Horrible!" I cried. "He is a fiend incarnate!"

Madame's fine lip curled. "He is on the contrary a clever and ambitious man, monsieur, and he intends to be presently the High Constable of France!"

"Madame!" said I, looking at her very keenly. "Forgive me if I pain you, but answer me this question: you are no doubt tenderly attached to M. de Brianceau?"

The lady blushed deeply and cast down her eyes.

"My husband is a good man," she murmured. "I honour his grey hairs. I would save him if I could!"

I turned to Mr. Daunt. The little man was looking about with an air of grave preoccupation, apparently searching for something.

"What is it?" I demanded.

He looked at Madame, unheeding me, and pointed to a door in the farthest wall. "There is a room yonder, madame, what is it?"

"A bedroom—my future prison chamber. Like this room, its windows overlook a precipice."

"H'm!" He strode to the window and looked out. "The yacht you speak of is under steam, madame."

Madame shrugged her shoulders. "Gentlemen!" she said, "I have confided in you. What prospect can you give me of deliverance? Is there any hope for me, for— for my husband?" Her face went deathly pale.

"Be easy, madame," said my master; "I shall deliver you, but you must accord me your assistance. Moreover, you must implicitly obey me. Do you agree?"

"Anything!" she cried. "Only save that good old man, he has been to me the kindest of friends."

"Silence!" said Mr. Daunt. Madame started up at his stern tones, but he eyed her with dominating gravity. "Pardon," he said, gently, "but you have promised to obey me."

Like many another who had encountered Mr. Daunt in his mood of action, Madame recognised a spirit of extraordinary power. I saw her eyes gleam as her will fought his; I saw the light fade as his inevitably prevailed, but, though mastered, there came upon her face an expression of awakened confidence and hope.

"I have promised," she said, submissively, a peculiar sweetness in her voice. "I am in your hands, monsieur."

"It is well, madame. Now, tell me, do you sympathise in this movement to give France a king?"

"I, monsieur!" she shuddered. "Heavens!—no. Think of the blood streams that would flow. I would give my right hand to prevent it."

Mr. Daunt seemed well pleased. "Good!" he cried. "I honour you for that thought, madame. Ha! by the way, you have perhaps in your pocket, madame, a powder puff?"

Madame smiled and blushed. "Perhaps!" she said.

"Give it to me!"

Wonderingly, she extracted from the bosom of her gown a little golden-mouthed bag of soft leather, which she handed to him. My master bowed, took it and marched to the bedroom door, which he opened and passed through. He returned presently, bearing a small dish of water, into which he emptied the powder and commenced to mix the mass into a paste. This done, he walked to a mirror and, for a while, grimaced before it. Soon he wrapped a great kerchief about his neck and chin, and applied some of the paste to his forehead, lips and cheeks. Suddenly with a grim laugh he swung round and confronted us.

Madame uttered a loud cry of astonishment; even I, though perfectly acquainted with my master's wonderful powers of impersonation, was constrained to exclaim in very surprise. Before us, to the life, stood Monsieur—— Pretender to the throne of France! Mr. Daunt, in everything except his clothes, had vanished

We examined him feature by feature. We beheld Monsieur's flabby nose, his pasty complexion, his baggy cheeks, his weak sensual mouth, his pointed chin, his protruding eyes. We gazed spellbound and speechless.

Suddenly, in the distance, we heard the sound of steel-shod hoofs clattering on stone. My master sprang to the mirror and wiped his face. Next moment he turned to us, himself again. His eye, roving round the apartment, examined everything in a flash. Like a cat, he presently darted towards a great corded ottoman in a far corner. Watching like people fascinated, we saw him whip out a knife, plunge it into the cushion, and then tear the cords from the lounge with a fierce ripping sound. In a moment there lay upon the floor a considerable length of twisted silken rope. Only then I divined his intention, and rushed to his aid, but he waved me aside. "The poker, the door!" he muttered. I hurried to the fireplace; I seized a poker, then with a spring took up my stand behind the door, so that I should be concealed from any person who sought entrance. "Strike hard, but take care not to kill!" hissed my master.

Hardly had he spoken when a loud rap sounded on the panels.

"Enter!" shouted Mr. Daunt.

The door opened and the Marquis de St. Hilaire crossed the threshold. He closed the door without turning his back: he did not see me.

My master waved his hand. I hated my task, but I fulfilled it. With a sweep I brought the poker down upon St. Hilaire's undefended head. He did not utter the least cry, and I caught him in my arms before he could fall. Madame, who watched all spellbound with horror, uttered a groan as I dragged her brother into the bedroom and laid him on the bed. In three minutes the Marquis was bound hand and foot, tied to the bed and firmly gagged. Leaving him there still unconscious, we returned to the outer room. Madame lay curled up on a lounge, her hands over her face, sobbing softly to herself. I wished to comfort her, but I dared not, for I was on duty and my commanding officer was the sternest martinet in the world. Mr. Daunt opened the outer door and beckoned me. Standing together on the threshold we held our breath to listen. Perhaps ten minutes passed thus. At first we heard much loud laughter and the clink of glasses, but these sounds soon diminished. At last a gong distinctly sounded through the corridor—once, twice, thrice, and all was still. "It must be the signal," said my master. He at once advanced a few paces into the passage and shouted at the top of his voice, "Monsieur! Monsieur! One moment. Helene needs you!"

"Is that you, St. Hilaire?" responded a distant voice.

"Yes, monsieur. I need you one moment."

"I come then."

Footsteps sounded on the staircase. My master darted back into the room and pulled me after him, but we left the door ajar. The footsteps approached. The door was pushed open and Monsieur's voice said, "Where are you, St. Hilaire?"

We were behind the door, we dared not speak, for fear of alarming our quarry. But at that moment of suspense Madame came to our aid. Her voice rang out, "It is I who need you, monsieur," she said.

Monsieur unsuspectingly advanced into the room, bowing profoundly and flourishing his hat. There was venom in the blow I dealt him, for the thought was in my mind, "Villain, you aspire to make Madame your wife against her will, do you!"

He fell like a log into my master's arms. Between us we bore him into the bedroom, and casting him, despite his princely blood, upon the floor, quickly despoiled him of his clothes. Mr. Daunt thereupon divesting himself of his own, donned Monsieur's attire, which, with the aid of a small feather cushion and some of the bed linen, fitted him presently to a charm. We had not sufficient rope to bind Monsieur, but I made shift with a rent sheet to render him helpless for some hours to come. Returning to the outer room, I locked the door and bestowed the key in my pocket. Mr. Daunt experimented for some while before the mirror, but at length satisfied, he turned to us. "Will I do?" he demanded. I can give him no higher praise than to affirm in all truth that he was Monsieur's counterpart, even to his voice. We assured him he was perfect. He smiled, and with a courtly bow offered his arm to Madame. "Come, madame," he said. "Say nothing, but leave all to me. We are about to quit this castle and embark with your husband upon Monsieur's yacht. Granville, you will kindly attend us!"

IV.

With stately steps my master marched from the room, Madame clinging to his arm. I followed them closely. Descending the stairs, my master led us to the dining hall. Before the table were seated, at one side, a very old man, who was propped up fast asleep in an armchair; on the other, three of M. de St. Hilaire's co-conspirators. Elegant gentlemen they were, all clad in evening dress, their faces flushed with the wine they had consumed. These latter sprang to their feet exclaiming loudly as we came upon them. My master advanced to the table and crashed upon it with his shut fist in such a manner as to make the glasses dance.

"Gentlemen," he growled, in a low, savage voice, "our plot has failed. We must begone! Lebeau has betrayed us. But for this man, who is a true Frenchman," (he pointed to me)



"I should have been caught like a rat in a trap. Within an hour the place will be surrounded with soldiers. But there is yet time to escape, and, by Heavens! I'll take with me a hostage. Do you gentlemen between you carry M. de Brianceau to my yacht. I'll then away to Belgium, where I shall await a better hour!"

His audience listened spellbound, and it must be recorded that while he spoke his audience had increased. There were now fully twenty gentlemen gathered in the room. They broke into a storm of cries and exclamations. Then of a sudden one demanded, "St. Hilaire, where is St. Hilaire?"

My master raised his hand, and silence fell. "St. Hilaire," he said, "is dead! Lebeau stabbed him!"

A storm of execrations followed. "Lebeau!" they cried, and "Revenge!"

My master raised his hand again. "Lebeau is dead!" he said, sternly. "St. Hilaire is fully avenged!"

The gentlemen glanced at one another with looks of terror, then gazed upon my master. His voice rang out again, pregnant with command:

"Come, friends, there is no time to lose; we must away. Those of you who wish, get instantly to horse. Those who will, are welcome to a passage on my yacht!"

"I!" cried one, "And I!" "And I!" shouted half-a-dozen others.

My master nodded. "Come, then, to the yacht! You, monsieur, and you!" (he singled out two) "carry M. de Brianceau. But make haste, make haste! Nay, go before me. There is no time for ceremony now!"

The assembly melted like shadows. Two gentlemen caught up the form of poor old de Brianceau and staggered off, panting under their burden. We followed them. Mr. Daunt grasped in his right hand a revolver which he had found in one of Monsieur's pockets. Madame clung to his left arm. We left the chateau by a postern gate, we traversed a drawbridge over a deep, hollow moat, and gained the road. As we crossed this, a man on horseback came towards the castle at a gallop. He was upon us in a second. My master's face was plainly apparent in the moonlight, also the man's. He was a black-visaged creature, and plainly not a gentleman. Mr. Daunt, in a low tone, commanded the bearers of M. de Brianceau to hurry on. We stopped, and the man accosted us, swinging off his hat.

"Good-night, monsieur," he said, then, stooping over his saddle, he muttered the word "Mahommed!"

Mr. Daunt gave a grim smile.

"Ah, M. Lebeau," he said, "M. de St. Hilaire awaits you in the castle. Make haste within!"

The fellow bowed deeply and urged on his horse. We thereupon hurried after the others at a run, and as we came up with them, my master cried out:

"It is all right, only one of St. Hilaire's servants! Hurry! Hurry!"

The path was rugged and precipitous. It led us a wild scramble down three hundred feet of cliff to a small sandy haven far below. We arrived there at last panting and blown from our exertions. The bearers deposited M. de Brianceau upon the beach and commenced to wipe their faces. Eight gentlemen were grouped together, a few paces from a small yacht's launch, which floated near the beach. Four sailors were seated at the oars, another, standing up to his knees in the surf, kept the boat steady. The yacht itself lay about a mile out in the bay. Mr. Daunt immediately directed his companions to place M. de Brianceau in the stern-sheets of the launch, and when this was done, at a sign from him, I gathered Madame in my arms and wading boldly into the water was assisted aboard by the sailors. My master followed. Climbing into the boat, he stood erect and turned to the oarsmen.

"Give way, my children!" he commanded sharply. "Row for your lives!"

I caught a quick glimpse of eight astonished faces on the beach, then, even before the sailors could comply with my master's orders, the gentlemen ashore who had respectfully allowed us to precede them, perceiving that they were about to be deserted, as on a signal darted in a body for the boat, uttering the wildest maledictions. Vigorous Daunt, with a snarling laugh, struck viciously at the first that reached him and the man dropped into the water. Another made a spring, but missed, for the boat was already receding from the shore. The rest halted up to their waists in the sea, shaking their fists and cursing like madmen.

Mr. Daunt addressed them:

"Gentlemen!" he said derisively, "when a plot fails it is every man for himself and the Devil for us all. I commend you to the Devil, for I have no room for you aboard my yacht. I trust, however, that you will be able to escape the clutches of the law. A last word of advice to you. France does not want a king! Farewell!"

* * * *

We gained the yacht without further mishap, and landed safely at Plymouth on the evening of the ensuing day, and thence set out immediately for London, accompanied by M. de Brianceau, who was very ill, and Madame, his wife.

So ended the little brown man's capricious experiment with poverty.

CANADA

*A Brief Introduction to the
Leading Article in this Issue
of the LONDON MAGAZINE.*

. . . BY . . .
LORD STRATHCONA.

IT has taken our fellow subjects in the United Kingdom many years to realise how enormous are the resources and capabilities of Canada, and the possibilities of its future.

While they have helped to swell the population and wealth of other countries, they have been slow to grasp the fact that, within the limits of their own Empire (a few days' journey from the Motherland), there are vast areas of fertile land only waiting occupation and cultivation to afford happy, contented and comfortable homes for millions of people.

Canada is only just beginning to attract the attention its importance deserves. It is now drawing to its shores many thousands of people every year from Great Britain, from the United States and from many other countries of the world. But what Canadians desire is that a very much larger number of settlers may arrive from what they call the "Old Country" or "Home." They want their own kith and kin to go over to help them to develop the great resources with which a bountiful Providence has endowed them.

The settlement of the land must be an enormous benefit to Canada, to the United Kingdom and to the Empire. It means not only happiness, comfort and advantages to those who go out, but to those who are left behind. It must bring about the expansion of trade, the greater certainty and regularity of our food supplies at all times, and increase the wealth and strength of the Empire. These are no mean objects to strive to attain.

Settlers going to Canada who have little capital beyond their own health, strength and muscle, will, if prepared to work and to exercise thrift and economy, find abundant opportunities for their energies now, and in the future; and in the course of a short time, with ordinary good fortune, should have a position for themselves and their families, and the chance of a future which they could hope to obtain in few, if any, other countries.

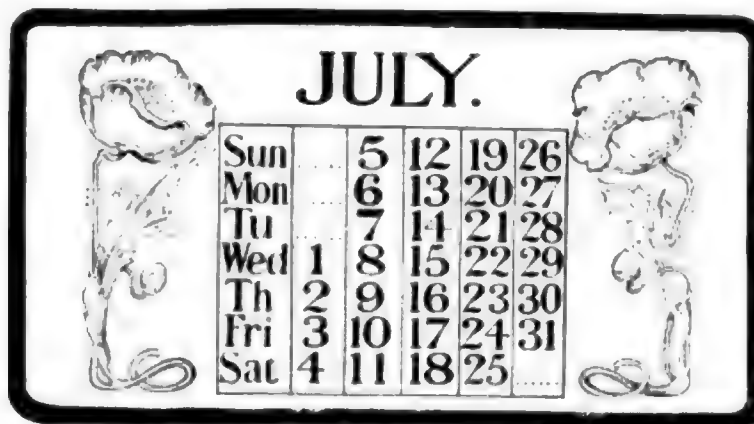
For settlers possessed of a little capital openings will readily present themselves in almost any of the Provinces of Canada, especially in Manitoba and the North-West, in agriculture and in many other directions.

For those again with more capital, there are even greater opportunities. But, after all, the same openings are available for everyone who chooses to take advantage of them, and to help in the development of the Dominion.

In Canada free farms of one-hundred-and-sixty acres are given to all, and further land may be purchased at nominal prices. Farm labourers and farmers are needed in larger numbers than are likely to go out for some years, so great is the demand for them, and so many the opportunities at their disposal. The same remarks apply to people in other walks and callings of life, and especially to domestic servants. In fact, there is room in Canada for all who are ready and willing to adapt themselves to the ways of the country, and to take part in the future that is before it.

The great thing for intending settlers to do is to get all the information that is possible before going out—to consult the Government Agents here and obtain their advice and assistance. They should do the same when they get to Canada, and place themselves in the hands of the nearest Government Agent. If they do this, and act upon the counsel that is given to them, they cannot go far wrong. They will probably live to bless the day when they found "fresh fields and pastures new" under their old flag, surrounded by people of the same race as themselves, proud of their origin, and with a deep-rooted belief in the Empire of which they are proud to form a part.

STRATHCONA.























"THE WOMAN OVER THE WAY."

A COMPLETE ROMANCE.

By WINIFRED GRAHAM.

Illustrated by BALLIOL SALMON

I.



HER friends called her "Lady Jac-Mac," because she had married Sir John Mackenzie.

The wedding, which took place abroad, was a very quiet affair, and little had been said about it in the papers, for until Sir John met

pretty Joan Carew he always declared he did not approve of second marriages.

Though a widower, with a promising young heir of seven years old, the prejudiced Baronet forgot his theories when the brightest face in all the world flashed across his vision. The sight of Joan, who was the very embodiment of merriment and rich in beauty, warned him that the springs of youth were still fresh, clear and sparkling in the heart he had believed dead.

So it happened that after a year of world wandering Sir John returned quite unostentatiously to his old historical mansion at Pineberry with a young bride, a mere girl, who revelled in the quaint Elizabethan building oddly named "Elizabeth Tower." The tower, so history tells, had been added to the house by the Queen's suggestion, in order that on her return a year later to the neighbourhood she might see the magnificent views from a better point of vantage. Certainly an old-world romance hung over "Elizabeth Tower," which boasted a priceless painting of Good Queen Bess. The place had a knightly air and character of its own, with its "royal parlour" and "Queen's bedroom," its minstrel gallery and great courtyards.

The countryside flocked to call upon "Lady Jac-Mac," and in a very few weeks she not only found herself the leader of society at Pineberry, but very genuinely loved and admired by all who came to do homage at the shrine of youth and beauty.

Joan would hardly have been human had she not enjoyed her popularity. She wanted

everyone to like her, not from personal conceit, but because she was in love with the world and the people in it!

Only one of the leading inhabitants held aloof and refrained from leaving that formal piece of pasteboard at "Elizabeth Tower," which, opening the door of acquaintance, may lead to the inner sanctuary of friendship.

Joan noticed the omission, for the defaulter lived in a charming residence, the gates of which faced the massive entrance portals to "Elizabeth Tower." Many callers had mentioned the Hon. Mrs. Ashworth, but Lady Mackenzie simply replied that she did not know her.

One elderly spinster, who considered herself of importance in the county, on hearing this had let drop certain hints which made "Lady Jac-Mac" slightly uncomfortable, though outwardly she laughed.

"Mrs. Ashworth," declared Miss Delvino spitefully, "is very particular about whom she visits, and though quite youthful herself, does not altogether appreciate the many *outré* customs now in vogue amongst young married women. A number of people in the best society have received the cold shoulder from Mrs. Ashworth."

"Really," remarked Joan, trying not to appear interested, but nettled in spite of herself. "I wonder if she thinks I do anything *outré*! I was always considered unconventional, and perhaps a little mad. I have to live up to my reputation. My husband was rather annoyed because a society paper got hold of my nickname and mentioned me as 'Lady Jac-Mac.'"

Miss Delvino coughed and hesitated. "You know, my dear," she said, "I am quite sure that when you meet Mrs. Ashworth all her preconceived ideas will be dissipated. But she has not been very well, and therefore, being a good deal indoors, has to rely upon what she hears. She asked me the other day if it were true that you persistently drove, rode, walked and bicycled without a hat! Of course I was bound to confess it was your strange custom."

"Oh!" laughed Joan, "I daresay she thinks that the new fashion I am trying to set in

England, from its very newness, borders on vulgarity. But why should a woman with good hair need any better covering for her head? I should like to argue out the point with Mrs. Ashworth, for the American 'summer girl' at all the smart watering places discards head-gear and lets the light and air do the work of hair tonics and restorers. I first met my husband at Naragansett Pier, amongst a crowd of hatless girls in the very latest gowns! He thought it a delightful fashion, and had seen the custom practised at Newport and Bar Harbour."

Miss Delvino sniffed. Joan thought there was something decidedly malignant in the sniff. She herself, unblessed by an abundance of hair, could see no beauty in "Lady Jac-Mac's" Titian coils of sun-bronzed glory.

Later in the day Joan repeated the conversation to her husband.

"Horrid old Miss Delvino," she said, "insinuated that the woman over the way did not think I was a nice person to know, because I drive without a hat and do unconventional things!"

Sir John laughed heartily, patting his wife's pretty rounded cheek.

"My child," he said tenderly, "don't you know there has been a feud going on for years between Ashworth and myself about some ground, one of those misunderstandings that seem difficult to clear up? I had hoped when you came Mrs. Ashworth might call and bury the hatchet. I really bear her husband no enmity, but when he brought his bride home I was already a widower, or I should certainly have asked my wife to leave cards. A piece of land which ought to be ours runs into his property, but he declined to sell it, and at the time I was rather angry. The whole thing appears very petty on looking back, but pray relieve your mind of the fact that *you* are disapproved of! I believe Mrs. Ashworth is a very charming woman, and Sidney seems to know all about her little girl."

As Sir John spoke, he looked down affectionately at his son and heir. The boy coloured slightly, and Joan, with a woman's quickness, noted the flush which rose to his forehead under the bright auburn curls.

These Ashworths interested her more than she liked to own. She had always an irresistible desire when passing the gate to turn in and run as fast as she could up the drive. Often she dreamt of the house and grounds, and of the unapproachable lady who disapproved of modern young married women. Joan felt she would like to dash into her presence, all sparkle and life, and, standing before her hatless and unashamed, ask how it was she dared exist in that neighbourhood without sanctioning the arrival of "Lady Jac-Mac" to Pineberry? There was a little fiend in the Baronet's youthful bride,

which played havoc with her peace of mind when she thought of the offending Mrs. Ashworth.

Joan, leaving her husband, who was smoking in a low chair, followed Sidney to one of the courtyards gay with flowers, where he had darted in pursuit of a butterfly. The fluttering wings, escaping him, flew away towards the tower, and Sidney was left gazing upwards, cap in hand, his handsome little face clouded by disappointment.

Joan, leaning against a sculptured figure, regarded him with admiring eyes.

"What a lovely boy he was!" she thought; those large eyes spoke of a soul which should have soared above the killing of butterflies.

"Sidney," she said, in a coaxing voice, holding out her hand, "do come and tell me about Mrs. Ashworth's little girl? Is she very pretty, and do you ever speak to her?"

Sidney's eyes brightened; the cloud on his brow vanished as he drew near to Joan.

"She's a little dear!" he whispered in such a funny old-fashioned voice that Joan nearly laughed, "and I love her ever, ever so much!"

The last sentiment was expressed in such deadly earnest, that Joan controlled her features, and tried to look grave.

"But how can you love her, Sidney," she asked, "when we don't know the Ashworths?"

"You see," he answered, confidentially, "she runs down and plays by their gate, and I go out by the South lodge—and—and—then we talk."

This simple explanation seemed to cost him an effort, for he wriggled away, though Joan, with her curiosity aroused, would feign have delayed him, and questioned further.

"What is her name?" she called out, for Sidney was evidently in a hurry to be off.

"Stara!" he cried, looking back over his shoulder, his little legs running in the direction of the South lodge.

"Stara!" thought Joan, "an uncommon name"; yet one she had always known and loved!

Sidney sang as he skipped over the ground. He wanted to take Stara that butterfly, but now he remembered he had some chocolates in his pocket, which might prove even more acceptable than the mangled remains of a "painted lady."

For a moment Joan thought of following him, then changing her mind, she went thoughtfully back towards her husband, remembering she once owned a pet dog named Stara, which died while she was at school.

The tears she then shed were perhaps the bitterest of her life, for the years had brought her no sorrows, since she lived in the sunshine of love, possessing the light-hearted nature of a child, with a woman's strength of character and warmth of soul.



will make nothing of a little matter like that ! Besides, she told me the other day that she was my friend. She asked me to love her. I said I would think about it, and after I had thought for quite a lot of minutes, I hugged and kissed her. You can't help loving step-mothers, they're so jolly kind !"

Stara seemed reassured. Winking back her tears, she accepted Sidney's chocolates, and in return, drew a large, square card from under her pinafore. "I got this for you out of a desk," she said, in a breathless undertone. "I thought you would like it if we were not to play together any more." She held up a large picture of herself and Mrs. Ashworth, the latter seated in a picturesque high-backed chair, while the child leant against the mother's knee.

Sidney stared for quite a long time at the beautiful photograph without speaking. Then he drew a deep breath, and put his arm round Stara again.

"Thanks," he said, "I'll keep it in the drawer with my tools and things."

Stara looked gratified. She had heard people say it was a very pretty portrait, and even her baby soul understood it was good to be pretty.

"I had not one of myself alone," she declared, "but you can cut mother out with your fretsaw, if you like."

"Oh, I don't mind her," he replied, placing the card under his arm, "it doesn't matter a bit."

Stara walked with him to the gate, and seating herself astride it, watched him hurry across the road. He waved cheerfully as he vanished through the massive portals which led to "Elizabeth Tower," little dreaming what a difficult task he was about to set "Lady Jac-Mac" !

On his way up the avenue he met her coming in search of him : she was curious to see how he managed his meetings with Stara. Only the night before she had dreamt again that her feet were stealing over the forbidden ground, and she was forcing an entrance into the presence of the woman who had slighted her ! Quickly Sidney stammered out his story, and as he placed his case before her, his absolute faith in her infallibility became apparent. This was the first great favour this small stepson of hers had ever asked. The sight of his eager face set her pulses beating faster, and sent the blood coursing rapidly through her veins.

What was this woman like—this woman over the way ? If only she had seen her just once in passing ; if only——

As the thought came, Joan's eyes fell upon the portrait Sidney held. Taking it from him, she stared and stared into the countenance of Mrs. Ashworth. It was a handsome, kindly, yet determined face. A clever brow only lightly shielded by a few wayward curls, eyes to be trusted, a mouth denoting character. Written

on the back of the portrait in a clear, strong hand were two names : "Miranda and Stara."

"So, ho ! Miranda Ashworth," cried Joan, laughing aloud, "I'll be a match for you yet !"

"Lady Jac-Mac's" brain whirled with sudden excitement, her eyes sparkled like sunbeams on a lake ; she danced a little jig in the drive.

Sidney watched her admiringly. "You will make it all right ?" he queried, clutching at her dress.

"I'll have a shot for it anyway !" she answered, a reckless note in her voice. "We are going right over there this minute into the enemy's camp—quick march !"

Joan turned as she spoke, and strode through the gates, holding Sidney fast by the hand. Straight across the road she went, with head erect and cheeks ablaze, while the golden sunset played some very charming tricks with those glorious uncovered Titian locks. They gleamed now like burnished copper—no coronet ever shone with the splendour of her crown.

She entered the Ashworth grounds with fearless tread and swinging gait. Once, growing impatient at the length of the drive, she broke into a run, which Sidney appeared to enjoy. He felt that perhaps they were doing something which was not quite correct, and the turn events had taken delighted the boy's adventurous spirit.

No word was spoken, for during that strange walk Joan hardly seemed to be herself. Surely some reckless unseen force was compelling her onwards—onwards—to what ?

She never paused nor hesitated, only now and again she hummed a cheerful tune, while her elastic step, graceful carriage and air of abandon made her like some nymph materialised from shady woodland groves.

The house loomed in sight, and Sidney caught a glimpse of Stara up at her nursery window. She had just returned for tea ; seeing him, she waved gleeful hands, and nodded smilingly.

A moment later and the door bell was pealing, for Joan rang as one who demands admittance.

The manservant, despite long years of training in facial stolidity, betrayed an expression of surprise as he recognised Lady Mackenzie in the hatless, gloveless, breathless figure on the doorstep.

He knew his mistress was not on calling terms with the "Elizabeth Tower" household, and marvelled at the eager tone in which the visitor asked for Mrs. Ashworth.

With fast-beating hearts Joan and her small charge passed down a long corridor, the walls of which were lined with famous prints and sporting pictures. But "Lady Jac-Mac" looked neither to the right nor to the left, her eyes, with the gleaming light in them, were set straight ahead, while the corners of her lips twitched with suppressed laughter.

Presently two high, white folding doors were flung open, and the intruder heard her name















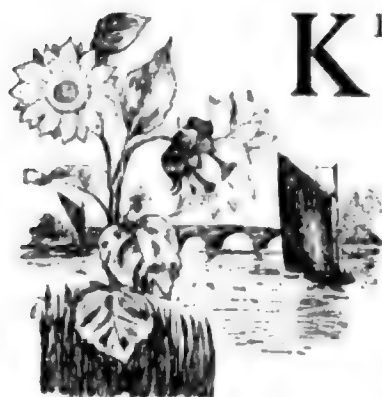


KITTY AND HER LESSON BOOK.

A SHORT STORY.

By ALICE and CLAUDE ASKEW.

Illustrated by ALEC BALL.



KITTY was pretty, delightfully pretty. She was also unlearned of life. Her hair had the ripe touch of yellow corn; her eyes were grey-blue, with a tint, in certain lights, of violet; her

features small and her mouth deliciously kissable. Not too tall, no daughter of the gods, only just a bit of dainty, winsome maidenhood.

She lived in a sleepy old Kentish village, and played the pretty part of the Squire's daughter to perfection—her natural rôle, you see.

Nice old man the squire. Behind his time, of course. A trifle too honest and outspoken, and a wee bit suspicious of things modern and beyond his ken; fond of the lands his forbears had bequeathed him, loving Kitty with the pathetic, foolish fondness of the old.

The mother had died young. A beautiful woman if her portrait were a true likeness. To Kitty she had become a dim dream, to the squire she was alive for evermore, only haze hid her out of sight.

The neighbours round were heavy, dull, and good, men and their wives alike. As it happened, there were few young folks about—which might have made things slow for Kitty, only, as it chanced, her garden and its green freshness contented her.

There was a certain Robert Hastings, only son of his father's house, an excellent young fellow in his way, and he liked—say

loved—Kitty, but he was only beginning to master life's alphabet when Kitty was taking spelling lessons—so you see—

Things came about in this manner. When the old Colonel Harding died, "Willowcote" was sold, and bought up by Lady Violet Stanton, clever leader of a certain set, widow of a small, sleek Jew; she dropped his name, by the way.

Lady Violet was distinctly interesting and, to some minds, beautiful. She had bought and sold in the past, and had had all her wild flower sweetness crushed out of her. Now at thirty-three she had developed into a remarkably handsome woman. She was tall and finely built, and had a white, colourless face, and dark, sombre eyes; but these eyes could warm up and flash. She dressed in rich frocks that suited her, long, trailing dresses, and wore furs splendidly. She knew her own attraction for men and liked it, also she liked clever men; she was a brilliant woman herself. She would never marry again, she said. She preferred to indulge in constant flirtations, none of them very serious, but they served to amuse her.

She came to "Willowcote," and furnished the old house according to her mood; fitted it with a medley of rare furniture, and draped every bare spot with rich oriental stuffs. Of course, it looked a woman's house, but I don't think she minded. She brought her own friends with her, a never-ending crowd of arriving and departing birds of passage, men of mark, and pretty, chattering women.

Her neighbourhood gasped and called. If she had not been a peer's daughter, I rather fancy they would have considered her eccentric. They were such very dull folk, their excellent brains would never have appreciated her flashing wit and real

cleverness. Not that Lady Violet would have minded ; she would have escaped many solid uninteresting dinner parties.

Kitty Fernal called with her father, and a curious friendship became the result. Lady Violet took a tremendous fancy to the girl whose freshness reminded her of what she had been once ; also Kitty puzzled her. She was absolutely innocent and sweet, and yet there was strength in her—strange strength.

To Kitty, "Willowcote" became a sort of fairyland. She bowed down before the strange dark woman who ruled like an empress and said things that made the brain reel, because you discovered so much in their vivid flash. She liked to sit in the large oak hall, with its curtained recess and its spice-burning lamp, and hear the talk that went on there. She did not know that those strange-faced men who came and went were men who helped to shape the age, or that the women with their lovely faces and marvellous frocks were social queens. Only she knew in some strange fashion that life, strong, vivid life, was flowing in and out of "Willowcote," and she wanted badly to understand what it all meant.

The people who came there seemed to have found a life outside life, and to get more out of symbol and unreality than the men and women whose lives were placid, peaceful and ordered, to take actual pleasure in stress and storm and to disdain content—and it was puzzling.

"Will you come and see a heroine of curds and cream?" wrote Lady Violet to her cousin, Owen Carthew. "You are not to make love to her on any account, but she is a sweet little pastoral and with a week's study——! Also I am fond of her."

It was in the spring that this letter reached Owen. He had just written the last scene of his new play and had got thoroughly bored with it. Also he had been thinking of the wood and hedge, and one gets tired of London in May. There is a call in spring that takes men to the woodland, a stir in the blood that can only be soothed by warm mother earth herself.

"I will come," he wrote back to his cousin, "and I will lie on my back in the sun and blink like an owl ; I shall enjoy an interlude of buttercups and daisies, for, to confess truth, dear Violet, I have got the dust taste of the city badly in my mouth. I shall not make love to your pretty miss. I detest green fruit."

So Owen Carthew came. He had to come, for some things are planned out from the beginning.

He was slight and dark, just over the medium height. A clever face, but the mouth had a cruel twist ; yet it had been a nice mouth before fortune kissed it, and Owen Carthew had been a nice boy—once. Now he was a clever, distinguished and successful man—"A deuced clever man," said the critics who gave such unstinted meed to his plays. "A dreadfully wicked man," cooed the women, who loved nothing better than his dangerous admiration.

He came, and Kitty, walking through her father's green meadows, came upon him suddenly, for such things have to be.

Owen Carthew looked at her. Here was something worth a man's look. A face fresh as a child's, angel's eyes that waited to be filled with love, red, tremulous lips, unknissed. This girl was youth incarnate, frank, fearless youth, and he had fancied her a miss of bread and butter. Owen flushed for himself and then felt sorry for Kitty, for he knew his power. She looked charming. She wore a gown of some white muslin stuff and a large broad-brimmed hat wreathed with roses. A pastoral? Oh, no, she was going to be more than a pastoral to him—romance, what he had missed as yet—romance ; so he didn't see his way to spare her.

He would teach Kitty all that of which her face said she was ignorant, show her the big lesson book, help her to spell it out. Then he would go away—and Kitty—Kitty would marry, and the girl herself be richer by a memory.

Kitty liked him, only liked him first of all. His open unconcealed admiration was startling, and even her unconscious maidenhood felt the force of the man's passion and in a way resented it. She drew her girlish dignity round her like a mantle and looked Owen full in the face, and something in her gaze warned him that she was miles above and beyond the other women he had loved and trifled with.

A week passed and the two met daily. Lady Violet might have seen how matters were going and have intervened, but she was fully occupied with her own affairs. A man who belonged to the early chapters of her life had turned up suddenly and this woman had been stirred by his coming, for she cared for him once.



"I must be going back to London town," said Owen every morning to Kitty, but he did not go—had no intention of going.

Kitty used to smile wisely. She knew that Owen Carthew liked blue sky and green leaf and she felt that Owen Carthew liked her.

The week lengthened to a month, then Lady Violet looked round to discover that her cousin had turned to an ardent, eager wooer, and that Kitty, little Kitty Fernal, had the love light in her eyes and the woman's smile on her lips—also she seemed expectant of joy.

"You might have spared that child, Owen," Lady Violet remarked coldly. "What have you done to her?"

"Taught her out of love's copy-book, cousin mine," he replied slowly. "It's a book everyone has to learn to read."

"She has learnt her lesson by heart, I'm afraid," said the woman with a short sigh.

"Perhaps I have, too," he whispered half to himself.

"You?" Lady Violet could be bitter with her scorn. "You know what sort of man you are, Owen. You will kiss and ride away, and she, poor little girl, will be left alone to nurse a heartache."

"Quite true," he answered gravely. "I shall love and ride away—but just because I realise that I'm not worth Kitty's heart, and not because I want to."

Lady Violet shot a quick glance at him. She started and drew in her breath shortly.

"Gracious, Owen," she murmured, "so it's come at last?"

"Yes," he said, throwing back his head, "it's come at last, and if it had come a few years earlier it would have been heaven; as it is, it's Hades. I shall hate to leave her."

"You could never marry her—you."

He bowed his head concurring.

"I don't think she'll mind much, you know, Violet, so there's no real harm done. I have just taught her how to spell love; she will write it at another man's dictation. I began the lessons because she was so pretty, you know, and sweet. Confound it all, why does a man fritter his life and youth away and then find just the one thing he wants too late?"

"Shall you tell her?" she asked.

"The sort of man I am? I don't think so. I'll leave to-morrow, Violet; slip out of her life as I came in."

"And never return? I doubt you, Owen; I know you."

"Have you ever known me in love before?" came his answer.

Lady Violet looked at him curiously; what she read in his face impressed her strangely. Was this man the Owen she had known, or some stronger mortal made of purer clay?

Owen Carthew decided after all to allow himself the pain and pleasure of farewell. He rode up to the Squire's next morning and asked to see Miss Fernal, and when the butler told him she was in the rose garden he made his way there, thinking, as he went, that a better spot could not have been devised for the parting of lovers.

Kitty stood amongst the rose trees, and she blushed red as any crimson bloom when she saw Owen striding down the path. She had been an apt pupil with her lesson book, and she understood Owen better than he did himself.

Little Kitty knew now why her dead mother seemed always present to her living father, and a hundred other beautiful things—the desire in the heart of the woman to leave home and kindred for a stranger's sake, the mystical comradeship with the beloved, and other texts from the book of love. Yes, she had grown very wise in a month, wise as the wisest women of all.

"I have come to say good-bye," said Owen.

He spoke coldly, because he kept himself in iron check, and had no mind to betray his secret. Kitty flinched. The warm blood ran away from her heart, and her cheeks and lips lost their fresh colour. She had expected Owen to tell her he loved her, and instead, this was his speech. She didn't say anything, but she just looked hard at him, a straight look from blue-grey eyes.

"I love you," said the man simply. He had to say something; they were eyes that must be answered. "I know I have no business to care for you," he went on lamely. "I'm not the sort of man your father would like you to marry. I'm a bad sort of chap altogether." His fine language had quite deserted him. "And I'm going straight out of your life."

Kitty smiled faintly.

"Isn't that for me to decide?" she said slowly. "If you love me, I think I have a right to decide that."

Owen looked at her in blank amazement. Was it Kitty who was speaking in that clear, confident voice with a ring of strength in it—tender, rose-leaf Kitty? If a man loved

a woman, did it give her a right over him? Had the pupil learnt more out of the lesson book than the master? For the first time in his life he felt uncertain as to a woman's attitude, and absolutely impressed by her strength. The mere fact of his caring so tremendously for the girl placed him at a disadvantage. No memory of other incidents could help him, for he had played the lover's part before as a mere actor. This time it was the real thing. Yet, running through all this meditation like a line of fire, came the passionate burning thought that he had come to the most actual and living hour of his life, and that he and Kitty between them would find the heart of things at this parting of the ways.

"It would be impossible for me to ask you to marry me," he said at last, "as impossible as for me to tell you the life I have led. Yet I love you, Kitty, as, God help me, I never thought to love a woman."

"What does your past life matter?" she answered, flushing deeply, "if you love me—you belong to me now."

There was a magnificent finality in her tone. Owen felt as if she had taken him by the hands and led him from the quicksands to the hill-top.

"It mustn't be yet," she decided, gently. "I think you must go back to London and your work. Let the past slip from you, the past I never want to know about——"

"Kitty," he interrupted, "are you a child, dear, or a very wise woman? Tell me truly, what does the word 'past' convey to you?"

She looked at him steadily.

"A great deal, though I know so little really. But I understand the word 'love' best."

"Which I have taught you?" his voice rang triumphant.

"Yes, which you have taught me, and which I am never, never going to forget."

So much a child, so much more a woman,

and beyond all so pretty and so sweet, no wonder he loved her and gloried in it.

"But what are we going to do, Kitty?" he asked after a moment helplessly, feeling that this slight girl held the situation in her hands, and that he, the man of the world, must abide by her judgment. He realised that, child-woman as she was, she understood matters better than he did, had a clearer range of vision and possessed greater strength. In fact, it was her strength and force that amazed him so. He had expected April tears and girlish heartbreak; he had prepared to renounce the prettiest chapter in life for the heroine's sake, and now—she had swept him off his feet, had taken his life by royal right of womanhood into her own safe keeping, and yet she was still eighteen-year-old Kitty and he the man of thirty.

Little Kitty smiled softly, and then blushed divinely.

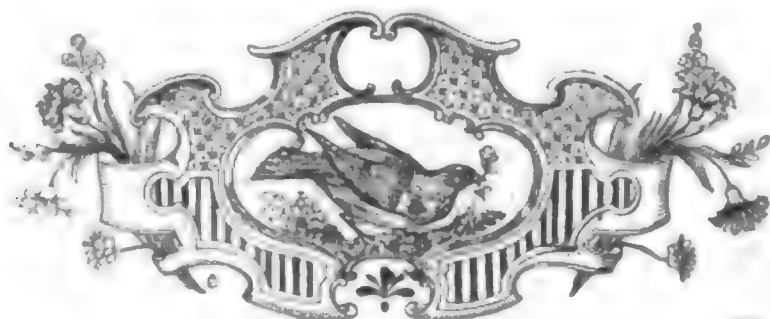
"You will go back to London," she said gently, "and after a while you will come back to me to finish teaching me, you know."

"And you will wait, Kitty, till I feel I can come? Wait till I have put the past so clean behind me that I can ask you to be my wife?"

She was silent for a second. The heavy odour of summer roses filled the air and made it fragrant of richness, birds flew overhead, their throats pulsing with melody, the sky was a sea of blue melting into white haze. Owen took in the whole scene. It was the big picture of his life, and Kitty, in the foreground, the directress of destiny.

"I will wait," she answered slowly and steadily, "and one day you will come!"

And one day Owen came. Came to find Kitty even as he had left her, sweet, strong and simple, ready also to take up the lesson book and read with him its fullest, deepest chapters. And this Owen who came was a changed Owen, a man who had turned from the cymbals of Pan to follow the harping of Love.















THE FACE IN THE DARK.

A POWERFUL SHORT STORY.

By L. T. MEADE and ROBERT EUSTACE.

Illustrated by SIDNEY PAGET.

I AM an unmarried man with sufficient means to support myself in a quiet way. I enjoy a bachelor's life, am fond of dabbling in literature, write occasionally for the Press, possess a fair knowledge of science, and produce the best photographs of any amateur that I know. I have no present intention of marrying, but I am by no means unsociable. I like the company of my fellow men, and go a good deal into society. My name is Laurence Hyne, and I am thirty-two years of age.

In these days of intense living no man who is not a confirmed hermit can shut himself away from strong situations, from moments of danger, or from hours when the world seems more or less to totter beneath him. I, like others, have had my due share of adventures of one sort and another, and the one I am about to tell was by no means the least curious of those that occurred to me.

On the 18th of a very hot June, I went to the reception of some friends of mine, the Sitwells, who lived in Berkeley Square. This was always a brilliant function, and I knew that I should meet many of my friends there. On this occasion there was one in particular, a young fellow of the name of Granby Manners, whom I particularly wished to shake once more by the hand. I had known him as a boy and as his mother had been my dearest and most valued friend, I took an interest in him. He was an open-handed, unselfish, clever lad, but was also one of the most nervous boys I had ever come across. His ideas were lofty and aspiring, but his nerves hampered him, and to such an extent that, when still quite a lad, not more than seventeen, he was ordered abroad, where he had resided under the care of a tutor ever since. Mrs. Manners had been a sort of elder sister to me—she had done me many good turns in life—had assisted me more than once, not only by her advice, but practically, and on her death-bed had charged me most emphatically to look after Granby, and if at any time I could do him a kindness not to hesitate, for her sake, to do it.

"He is ten years your junior, don't forget that, Laurence," she said. "He knows little or nothing of English life. When the estate comes to him he will be surrounded by adventurers—help him if you can."

I promised faithfully, and now the time had come, for Granby's mother and father were both dead—the boy inherited the old Croftwood estates, and had come home to attend to business matters.

On the day of the Sitwells' function I received a letter from Lady Willoughby, Granby's aunt. She wrote from Scotland.

"My nephew is in London," she wrote. "Pray find him out and write to me with regard to his appearance, his prospects, his present ideas of life. He was always a strange boy, and not at all a person to own a big estate like Croftwood Hall. I am unable to travel, as you know, but my dear sister told me on her death-bed that you had promised to be good to him. Pray do what you can and let me know."

Accordingly I went to the Sitwells primed in every way to see after young Manners. Mrs. Manners had had an unhappy life—her burden was a heavy one, so heavy that it had sent her to her grave before her time. The facts were these. Her husband was one of the worst of men—a drunkard, reckless, fast, extravagant. There were rumours of even darker vices—of deeds committed that ought never to have seen the light of day. Some people said that the man was half insane. Well, he was dead, and the boy was not in the least like him.

I arrived at the Sitwells in good time. The house was already full of guests and very soon I ran up against young Manners. He had a bright face, a refined, elegant appearance, and an affectionate manner.

"I am glad to see you," he said to me. "This is quite like old times. Where can we go to have a long chat?"

"You must come to my rooms for that, Granby. But here—this terrace is empty for a few moments. Come and stand under this awning and let me look at you."

We went out through an open window and stood on a beautiful terrace screened by an awning and decked with flowers.

"You do look quite a man, Granby," I said. "Why, you must be two-and-twenty. Your hands must be pretty full of business now, my boy, with that big estate, and you the sole person to look after it."

"The fact is, Hyne," he answered, "I am so harried and rushed about that I have hardly a minute to call my own. I want to come to see you, and will at any hour you like to appoint."

"Here are two chairs," I said, suddenly, for as he spoke I noticed the old nervous catch in his voice, and the quick movement of the head that spoke of a highly-strung system. "Sit down, won't you, Granby. You have a big story to tell me. Let's begin to hear it at once."

"Well," he answered, "there's a great deal to say. My father has left things involved, but, of course, they *may* come all right; I can't say. Sometimes I fear—sometimes I hope. Anyhow, I shall know soon. What day is this—the 18th. I shall know, I must know, before the 24th."

"What do you mean by that?" I asked in astonishment.

"I will tell you presently. I could not in this crowd."

He glanced nervously behind him.

"Come and dine with me to-morrow night," was my answer.

His face lit up with pleasure. He was about to reply in the affirmative when some people came on to the terrace. They were two girls, both handsome and total strangers to me. I saw, however, that Granby knew them. His face flushed with vivid colour, and his eyes grew dark with delight. He greeted both girls, and especially the slighter and smaller of the two, with effusion.

"This is good," he said; "I was just talking to a special friend of mine. May I introduce you?"

A moment later I was shaking the hand and looking into the face of the brightest and most capable girl probably in the whole of England. Her name was Angela Dickinson. She was the daughter of a well-known barrister, who would undoubtedly be appointed to a judgeship before long. She had only lately come out—had met Manners when abroad: they were great chums. Oh yes, it was good to see him again. They smiled at each other, and young Manners and Miss

Angela Dickinson went off together; the other girl, whose name was Muriel, fell to my share to entertain.

"I am so glad we have met Mr. Manners and that he looks so well," she said. "When we saw him at Naples he often appeared very much troubled. I am glad he has met an old friend in you."

"Yes," I replied. "I have known Granby since he was a little boy. His mother was one of my best friends. Granby had a sad childhood: his father—I suppose everyone knows about him."

She nodded and looked grave.

"The man is dead," I continued. "Let his ashes rest in peace. It seems to me, Miss Dickinson, that Manners' only fault is that he is extremely sensitive."

"I know that," she replied. "Angela and he are great friends."

I followed the direction of her eyes. The pair were standing closely together at the further end of the balcony.

"There is not a doubt that they care for each other," said Miss Muriel; "but up to the present no word has been spoken—at least to my father. I wish he would speak—his silence puts Angela in a strained position."

Soon afterwards I took my leave, going home to attend to some special business which was occupying me that night. Just as I was going downstairs young Manners bounded after me.

"May I come to-night instead of to-morrow night?" he said. "It doesn't matter about dinner. I want to talk things over with you."

I told him to come in about nine o'clock, and he nodded his acceptance.

Punctually to the hour he arrived, looking handsome and gentlemanly in his evening clothes. I offered him a pipe; he sat down and we both smoked in silence for a minute or two.

"Well," I said, suddenly—for I saw that it must be my business to lead the way—"I felt rather anxious about you when we sat together in the balcony; but Miss Dickinson has relieved all my fears. You are all right, Manners—I congratulate you most heartily on your future."

He wrung my hand but did not speak.

"I suppose the engagement will soon be announced?" I said, after a pause.

"Oh, we are not engaged, at least, not exactly. I'd give the world if it could be,

but I don't see my way—there are difficulties, and monstrous ones. It is about those I want to talk to you."

"Well, speak up, old chap. I am interested in you from every point of view. Tell me everything and we will take counsel together."

He drew his chair close to mine.

"When were you last at Croftwood?" was his remark.

"Not for some years now—not since your mother's death. I grant that the old place is gloomy, but nevertheless I love it. In your hands it will assume a very different appearance. You can rebuild and redecorate. You can cut down sufficient timber to give the place more air, and not such a crowded-up appearance. Croftwood Hall will be, I am sure, a lovely place in your reign, Manners, and Miss Angela is the very girl to make you happy there."

"I love the place," he answered—"it has been in our family for hundreds of years. Nevertheless I dread it very much. I had a terrible fright there and have never been the same since. Did you hear of it?"

"No," I answered, puzzled at his tone.

"It happened a long time ago now, and it was on account of that I was sent abroad. My mother and father were away at the time—my mother was ordered to the sea for her health. You know, of course, that the old place is supposed to be haunted?"

"Most old places are," I answered in some heat. "But really, Manners, at this time of day to talk of haunted houses means nonsense. No old family seat is complete without its ghost. But what of that—no one really believes in the unearthly visitant."

"Some people do," he said with a shudder. "Well, let me tell you. My father and mother were both away—my mother wanted me to go to her, but my father refused. You know what a brute he was."

"Hush," I said, "he is dead."

"Dead or alive, I must speak the truth—he was a brute. I dreaded and hated him, but I worshipped my mother. I was terribly put out at being left behind. I was a big lad—fifteen at the time, but I cried myself ill. The house was horribly lonely, and there were only two servants—old Tarring, the butler, who is still there, and the cook. Half the rooms were shut up. The days were terrible and the long evenings were enough to turn one's brain. I had not even a book to read, for my father had locked up the library. I had not a friend to speak to,

there was not a young person anywhere within miles. My nervousness, always a big thing, got worse. I lost my sleep—I used to wander about the old house half the night. On one special night I was so bad that I could not eat any dinner, and afterwards I had a fit of shivering and fancied I saw things whenever I looked up. I rang for Tarring at last and begged of him, for God's sake, to keep me company. You know him, of course, a bent old party with a nose like a beak. He came up and looked into my face and said solemnly—

"'Master Granby, if this goes on you will be mad soon.'

"What do you mean?" I asked looking at him with terror.

"'You have madness in your eyes, sir, and you inherit it—don't you forget that. There's that gentleman, your great-great-uncle, whose portrait is in the picture gallery. He died in Bedlam. You'd best go and look at his picture and be warned. A young gentleman like you ought to be happy. He should come to his meals with appetite and sleep sound o' nights. Take my advice, sir, think no more about nerves or fancies, or they will be your undoing.'

"He went away, having positively refused to stay with me another moment, declaring that my face gave him the blues and that he preferred cook's company in the kitchen. I thought I would go to bed and drown my terrors in sleep. I covered myself well up with the bedclothes, but I could not rest. You remember the picture gallery at Croftwood, don't you, Hyne?"

"Perfectly well," I replied.

"It is on the ground floor, and occupies almost the whole west wing of the house. It communicates with the chapel at one end and with the dining-hall on the other. I lay with my eyes wide open, my heart beating like a hammer, and my thoughts full of my mad great-uncle. Suddenly I remembered that his name was also Granby Manners. I took an unhealthy desire to look at his face. It could not be combated. I got up, and candle in hand went down through the old house. At last I found myself in the picture gallery. You know those deep embrasures near the mullioned windows?"

I nodded.

"The picture was at the end close to the old chapel. Just as I got up to it, I saw someone standing behind me—someone in black—with a hood on. The whole thing was



strong and healthy once again. Then came the terrible news of my mother's death—I should never see my darling more. I was stricken to the earth—I resolved never to return to England. But two years after my father died, and the lawyers wrote and said that I must return home at once. I found the estate terribly involved, in short, the outlook is most gloomy."

"Have you told this strange story to Miss Dickinson?" I asked.

"I have. She knows everything. She knows that we cannot be engaged until things clear up a bit. If they never do, which is more than probable, I must give her up. Yes, I must, however hard it may be. As to the story of my mad ancestor, I do not think much about it. There has not been a second case of insanity in the family—so that goes for nothing; but I cannot ask Mr. Dickinson for Angela when I have no money to support her with."

"Surely that sounds ridiculous," I said. "You, as owner of Croftwood Hall, must have plenty of money."

"That is the point, Hyne," he replied. "The complications are enormous. I will come to that presently; but as we are talking of nerves and fancies, may I tell you something else? You have heard, of course, of the Croftwood Elm?"

I nodded. He was alluding to an enormous elm, of great age, which grew by itself just within sight of the house. There was a superstition in the old place that a branch from this elm always fell before the owner's death.

"I was at Croftwood last week," continued Granby. "The gardeners were clearing away the great branch which had fallen from the elm two days before my father's death."

"Well," I said, "you are not going to think anything of that. It was merely a coincidence. Gales of wind will break off the branches of old trees to the end of time. Come, Manners, I am ashamed that you should pin your faith to such rubbish. But tell me, when are you going to Croftwood again?"

"To-morrow."

"What! To-morrow! May I come with you?"

"Would you come?"

His face lighted up with intense pleasure.

"That would be splendid," he said. "I can't tell you how I hate these visits. A great deal hangs on what takes place in the next

few days. Poltimore will be there. He is the horrible man to whom the estate is mortgaged."

"Croftwood Hall mortgaged?" I cried.

"Yes, and up to the hilt. I shall be awfully glad to tell you. Of course, what I say is in confidence. I don't want the whole world to know that I am a pauper."

"You cannot be that," I answered; "but anyhow, you can trust me."

"I will tell you everything to-morrow," was his answer.

He rose as he spoke, and soon afterwards took his leave.

According to my appointment, I met the lad at Waterloo the following day. We reached Croftwood soon after six o'clock. It was a lovely day, bright and not too warm, and as we drove through the park the old trees in their summer greenery restored many memories to my mind.

"Here we are," cried Granby, as the dog-cart put us down at the porch, where the old butler was waiting to receive us.

A more decrepit, bent old man I had never seen. His hooked nose, his distorted, claw-like hands, gave him the appearance more of a bird of ill-omen than anything else. As he glanced with a fixed and by no means amiable expression from Granby to myself, I observed that his eyes were keen, bright, and sharp as a needle. Whatever else had happened to old Tarring, his intellect was still well to the fore. Tarring knew me, although he pretended to regard me as a total stranger, and evidently viewed me with small favour.

"Are there no letters?" asked Manners.

"The post won't be in just yet, sir."

"Well, Tarring, Mr. Hyne has come to stay with me. See that you get a room ready for him. Now, Hyne, let us have a stroll before dinner. Doesn't the place look lovely just now? By the way, you never have met Mr. Poltimore. He was a great friend of my father's. I will tell you how my affairs stand before we see him."

We strolled off through one of the gardens.

"The situation is far worse than you have any idea of," he began. "I will endeavour to explain. No one knows exactly what my father's life was, but there is no doubt that on a certain night he got into a most terrible affair in London. Nobody knows what he did, but it was necessary for him to have twenty thousand pounds in cash that night. It was that or suicide. He obtained the

sum, how I don't know, from Mr. Poltimore, who is a rich jewel merchant in the city.

"In exchange for the money my father gave the man a document all duly attested and witnessed—a sort of mortgage on Croftwood. It is to this effect. That Mr. Poltimore holds the place as security for his money, and the mortgagee has to pay 10 per cent. on the loan. There are arrears of interest now amounting to ten thousand pounds. This sum has to be paid on Midsummer day, or, according to the mortgage, Mr. Poltimore seizes the property, which is worth not less than a hundred thousand pounds. But there is another and more terrible clause. It is this: even if the interest is paid regularly, I shall only have the place for my life, after that it passes altogether into Poltimore's hands, or into the hands of his heirs. If the arrears of interest can be paid by Midsummer day all will be well as far as I am concerned, but no child of mine can ever inherit the place. You must see for yourself that under such conditions I can't ask Angela Dickinson to be my wife."

"I am not surprised," I answered. "But have you no reasonable hope that your lawyers will raise the money?"

"They say they will do their best. But it is by no means easy."

"Suppose they fail—have you no other means of getting the money?"

"No," he answered. "I once purchased some shares in a gold mine, and I think they will, in time, bring me in a lot of money, but of course it is all a speculation, and I don't suppose anyone would lend on the chance."

"I see," I replied. "And of course it is very much to Mr. Poltimore's advantage that you should not pay the interest on Midsummer day, for he would then have a place worth one hundred thousand pounds for twenty thousand."

"Quite so," was his reply.

Our stroll had led us by this time to the old elm tree.

"Ah," cried Manners, "look for yourself. Here is the place where the branch fell before my father's death."

We struck off across the grass towards the gnarled old tree.

"I thought they had cleared it away before now, but it is still there. How odd."

We were standing exactly under the tree, and a big branch, looking very fresh and green, lay beneath it at our feet. Granby's face turned white.

"Another branch," he cried. "What does this mean?"

"Nothing, except a fresh gale," was my answer.

"You don't understand," he replied, impatiently. "A branch of the old elm always falls before the death of the owner. I am the present owner. What does this allude to?"

"Come away, and don't be nonsensical," were the words which crowded to my lips, but before I could utter them a bass voice, loud and ringing, sounded through the trees.

"Hullo!" it called.

I glanced up with relief at the interruption, and saw a tall, heavily-built man in corduroys approaching us rapidly.

"Hullo, Granby," he cried. "Just come down, eh? How seedy you look—white as a turnip. What's the matter?"

"Nothing, thanks. Let me introduce you to my friend, Mr. Laurence Hyne, Mr. Poltimore."

Poltimore raised his hat. I thought I had never seen a more disagreeable face. He eyed me with small favour and turned again to the boy.

"Is your friend coming to stay?" he asked somewhat pointedly.

"Certainly. As my guest," said Granby, in a low tone.

Poltimore uttered a mocking laugh.

"Your guest, forsooth," he said. "By the way, have you had that letter?"

"No, but it may come by this evening's post."

"You will be out of suspense at least, after you have heard," said Poltimore.

He glanced round with a frown at me, and we turned towards the house. As we entered it, Tarring approached and handed Manners a letter in a blue envelope.

"Ah, here it is," he cried.

He turned aside to open it, his fingers shaking. Poltimore watched him with intense excitement.

"Well," he said impatiently, "what is the news?"

"Good news for you, Mr. Poltimore," said Granby then. "There need be no secret," he continued, and he glanced from me to the other man. "The loan cannot be raised, therefore, in four days this house is yours."

Poltimore raised his hand and brought it down again with great force on his thigh.



I read it ; it ran as follows :—

DEAR SIR,—We regret to inform you that we cannot raise the money. The shares in the mine you hold are of no value as security. The estate will therefore pass to Mr. Poltimore on Midsummer day.

"But surely," I cried, "it would be possible to find twenty thousand pounds in order to let you keep the property. To tell you the truth, Manners, I don't believe in that extraordinary document your father signed. At least, I should like to have a good look at it. The estate is entailed."

"Yes ; but he broke the entail."

"How so ? How is that possible ? He could not do it without your permission, and you were not of age."

"He sent me a paper to sign on my twenty-first birthday. I never even guessed what it was, and signed practically without reading, but now I am certain it was that, and I signed away my birthright."

I could not help feeling a sense of dismay. Manners had no more notion of business than an infant.

I thought hard during the remainder of that evening, and at last it suddenly occurred to me to consult no less a man than Mr. Dickinson, the father of Miss Angela. I determined to tell Granby of my resolution.

"You shan't want a friend at this juncture," I said. "If I had the money I would lend it to you with a heart and a half, and think myself well off, too," I added, "for Croftwood Hall is admirable security for any loan. But I have nothing like that amount at my command, so there is no good wasting time over that thought. The place, however, is worth saving, even if you had nothing to do with it. We don't want an old family place to get into the hands of a scoundrel of Poltimore's sort. Now I propose to go to London to-morrow, for there is, as you are aware, not a moment to lose, and when there I shall consult Dickinson."

"What ?" cried Granby. "Angela's father ?"

"The same."

He looked uncomfortable, started up and began to pace the room. "You—would not surely tell him—about —— ?"

"You must leave that to me, my boy. Whatever happens, I must have an open hand. You cannot be worse off than you are now, and it would be impossible for Dickinson to despise you for loving his daughter."

The poor fellow covered his face with his hands and groaned.

"I am off in the morning to do what I can," I said. "In the meantime, stay here and await events."

I was sorry afterwards that I had not insisted on taking him with me : but how could I foretell the horrible future.

I reached home soon after eleven o'clock, and telephoned immediately to Dickinson to know if he could see me. I had a reply in the affirmative, and went to his chambers soon after noon.

"Come out and have lunch with me," he said heartily, "and then you can tell me what it is all about. Young Manners and the Croftwood estate ! But surely that is a fine property ?"

"It is if we can rescue it," I replied, "and it is for that purpose I want to consult you."

We lunched in his favourite coffee house off the Strand, and I told Dickinson as much as I thought necessary of the story. He was a middle-aged man, with a staid, reserved face. It was difficult to understand how he could be the sparkling and vivacious Angela's father. He sat quietly after my communication had come to an end, then he said abruptly—

"Have you told me everything ?"

I looked at him and resolved to trust him.

"There is one thing I have left out," I said. "It is this. Young Manners loves your youngest daughter as faithfully and truly as a man can love a woman. He would make her a good husband, and Croftwood is not to be despised."

"That is true," answered Dickinson. "I don't know what can be done, but I will consult my solicitor. If anyone can help you, Wantage is the man. Stay, I will give you a letter to take to him at once. You can explain matters more quickly than I could, and there isn't a moment to lose."

"The worst happens on Midsummer day, and this is the 20th. We have only four days."

He gave a low, significant whistle, then dashed off a few words to Wantage and put the letter into my hands.

Wantage was busy in his office in Lincoln's Inn. He was a little red-headed, freckled, elderly man, with a keen face, an observant eye and a manner which expressed nothing. He was very busy, as numerous clerks testified, but Dickinson's letter was *Open Sesame*, and I was allowed to see him almost immediately.

"A curious case," he said, after we had

talked for over an hour. "Will you kindly leave me now, Mr. Hyne, and come back about this time to-morrow. I can give you my answer then—yes or no."

There was nothing for it but to comply. I spent the evening at my club, slept as best I could during the night that followed, and punctually to the moment was back with Wantage in the afternoon of the twenty-first. I was taken at once into his presence. He shut the door and locked it.

"I have not been idle since I saw you," he said to me. "I have been making enquiries with regard to those gold reefs. I have also heard several things by no means to Poltimore's credit. I do not believe that at the worst he can uphold his claim. It is my very firm impression that the law wants him, and sooner than he has any idea of. At any rate, one thing must be done—the cheque must be paid. I will let you have the amount. I heard, on the whole, favourable accounts with regard to those gold reefs. Croftwood is worth saving, the young man is worth rescuing. Now, if you will help me, the thing can be done."

"No fear of my not helping you," I answered cheerfully. "I would almost cut off my right hand to help that boy."

"Thanks, Mr. Hyne," he said, gazing at me critically and almost with a quizzical expression. "You are a good friend."

"His mother was a good friend to me."

"Ah, I respect you, Mr. Hyne. Well, this is your part in the matter. The cheque must be paid to you, and you must pay it to Poltimore. The lad himself must have nothing to do with it. You must accept Poltimore's letter of release. This is a matter for a lawyer, however, and if you are going down to Croftwood to-morrow I shall have pleasure in accompanying you. Poltimore may play tricks with Manners, and possibly also with you; but I do not think he will dare to try them on with me. Will you be ready to accompany me to Croftwood Hall to-morrow?"

"Certainly," I said.

We talked a little longer; matters were finally arranged, and I left in high spirits.

On my way home it occurred to me that I would wire to Granby.

I accordingly sent the following very cheerful message:—

All right. Money will be raised. Coming down with solicitor to-morrow. Cheer up.—LAURENCE HYNE.

The rest of the day passed as usual. It was not until nine o'clock, just after I had returned from dining at my club, that all of a sudden it flashed upon me what a deadly and dangerous thing I had done in sending that wire to Granby. I sprang from my chair. Manners would, of course, tell Poltimore, and the man would be beside himself with rage and disappointment. Beyond doubt, Poltimore was in a most serious position; his own affairs were so critical that if he did not get relief soon, such as the Croftwood estate would furnish him with, he would go under, how deeply and how far I could not guess; but he would be submerged—ruined. As far as he was concerned, everything depended on whether young Manners was able to pay him by Midsummer day, or—great heavens! there was another alternative. Should Granby Manners *die* before Midsummer day, Poltimore would be equally safe—indeed, more safe than if the arrears of interest were paid. Then, beyond doubt, the estate would be his. He would be a rich man. Should Granby die Poltimore would have attained the utmost height of his ambition. The position was too fearful to contemplate quietly. I, who had hoped to liberate the boy from all his troubles, had, by sending that telegram, in all possibility sealed his death warrant. A desperate and cruel man with no principle would do anything. Then there was that scoundrelly butler, a coward without a scrap of conscience. He had always hated the boy. I saw hatred in his eyes when he greeted us both at Croftwood Hall. Yes, beyond doubt Manners was in the gravest danger.

It was impossible for me to rest. Late as it was, I found myself ten minutes afterwards in a hansom cab. I had determined to catch the ten o'clock train from Waterloo. Not an instant's delay must keep me from the place. I would wire to Wantage in the morning. He could come down and the necessary business could be transacted. But I, in the meantime, would be on the spot to prevent mischief.

I am not given to nervous fancies, but I must confess that during that railway journey to Croftwood station I had about as bad a time as a man often lives through. There was the lonely deserted house, steeped in all its superstitions; there was the supposed ghost; there was the villain who would stop at nothing; there was his tool, the old butler; and there was the boy himself, nervous, highly strung, innocent.



The train seemed to crawl—it stopped at every station. By the time I reached Croftwood station it was nearly one o'clock. There was no fly to be had—there was nothing for it but to finish my journey on foot. I knew my way well, and struck off along the country lanes at a brisk pace. The night was fine with a high wind. Scuds of broken cloud raced across the moon, giving alternate moments of bright light followed by darkness.

At last I turned up the avenue and finally reached the house. There was no light in any of the windows. I determined not to ring the bell, but to make my way round to the left under some close growing shrubberies. I thought it extremely probable that I could enter by the old chapel, a place no longer used either for prayer or praise. No one would think of the chapel, or be concerned as to whether the heavy oak door was locked or not. I had observed that it was unlocked when with Granby two days ago. Now it yielded to my pressure. I went straight through the chapel. This led me into the picture gallery, at the further end of which was a secret door by which I could eventually reach Granby's room.

As I walked quickly down the long picture gallery, the greater part of which was in intense darkness, the windows having been all barred and bolted, I suddenly paused and listened. Something had broken the silence. What could it be? It sounded like low guttural breathing. My heart beat fast as I advanced, then it almost stopped, for hanging unsupported, and brought into relief by a long ray of moonlight which fell through a badly-fitting shutter, was a face within a few feet of my own. Oh God!—the face was *upside down*, while breath passed quickly between the anguished lips. It was the face of Granby.

This scene lasted for only a minute: before I could speak everything was changed—a bright light flooded the apartment, and Poltimore, a candle in his hand, approached from the dining hall end. Granby was hanging by his feet. I rushed at the villain—a desperate encounter took place.

"What is this, you scoundrel?" I shouted.

He swung me off with the strength of a man nearly double my size, pushed the old butler towards me and dashed away. The latter I seized.

"Help me at once, Tarring," I cried, "or I'll wring your neck. Save Mr. Granby—what are you about man? Be quick."

His face was ghastly, but he spoke no word. We worked quietly. A step-ladder stood behind us and a few moments later Manners lay upon the floor, still breathing, but unconscious.

"Go and fetch brandy," I cried.

The man disappeared and soon returned with a decanter and a glass. I poured a little down the boy's throat, and he opened his eyes.

A few hours later Granby was able to tell his own story.

"I got your telegram, and was nearly mad with joy," he said. "Poltimore found me holding it in my hand. He rushed at me, seized the sheet and read the news. I shall never forget his face. It was just as though I were in Hades, and saw the face of a lost spirit. But before I had time to realise anything he had caught me in his powerful grip. He said something to Tarring who was not far off and they carried me away with them to the picture gallery. I think I fainted, for when I came to myself I was tied by the ankles to that beam. What I lived through during the next awful hours I can never by any possibility explain."

The doctor when he arrived made it clear that death must have ensued in a very short time. This would have been caused by the enormous congestion of the brain. The cunningness of the mode of murder was made apparent when the doctor further said that after the boy died and the body was lowered down, there would not be the slightest trace apparent to anyone of what had happened.

Both Poltimore and Tarring were arrested, and are now undergoing a term of penal servitude.

As to Granby, his friends clustered round him, and the estate was put on a firm basis. He is about to marry Angela Dickinson in a short time. The shares in the gold reef have also turned out trumps, and the owner of Croftwood Hall will once more be a very rich man.

In the bright, calm, handsome fellow, who shows not a trace of fear or nervousness, who is happy of the happy, and gay of the gay, few would recognise the boy whom I was the means of rescuing from the most terrible death.



THE











STRANGE PROPOSALS IN FICTION.

NOVELISTS AND THE UNCONVENTIONAL WOOING.

By HENRY LEACH.

Illustrated by A. E. JACKSON.

LOCKSMITHS are not the only persons or things that have aroused the derisive laughter of Cupid. Next to his contempt for the maker of obstacles, the wayward little god is most a despiser of rules and customs. He plots and plans for the making of his love spells, and if the happy end he contemplates be achieved it is held by all concerned to be sufficient excuse for any methods which may have been employed. We who may not for the time being be under his control conceive that there is but one way to woo—to ask the simple question, when the crisis comes, in a respectful, but fervent, manner, and to embellish the remarks which are made upon the occasion with such particulars as may be considered necessary under the peculiar circumstances which present themselves.

When we come to this conclusion we feel rather inclined to pick a quarrel with those who picture the romantic side of life to us in story books, and to snarl upon them with some such comment on their work as that there is surely much in the old saying that truth, after all, is stranger than fiction. For the fact is that there is nothing the author loves so much as the conventional proposal. He will illuminate it with all the charm of delicious sentiment, and fashion such a love scene from his simple materials as none will cavil at; but, when all has been written, it amounts to but the simplest question asked under the simplest circumstances. It is a bold thing to say, but even Romeo, prince of lovers as he was, yet was simple and unoriginal in the essential features of his lovemaking. Therefore, if, as we say, some novel proposals which we can call to mind have, as far as we know, been made in novels only, that is not to suggest that they exceed the limits of possibility in all cases, nor even that, considering them in the aggregate, they

in any way approach those limits. But the real proposals will by a blessed secrecy always remain as unwritten chapters of domestic history, and in lieu thereof we must needs content ourselves with the samples drawn from fiction to show that there are more ways than one of asking a most momentous question.

Of the wooings of the heroes of Shakespeare there are many varieties, though the king of our poets had ever a leaning for the simply beautifully romantic, and the love passages in his plays are less distinguished for peculiarity than for a plain but exquisite charm. And yet, upon occasion, Shakespeare could contrive a curious situation for the invitation of love, as witness that most extraordinary wooing of shrewish Katharina by Petruchio. With preliminary arrangements for the match between them already made, Petruchio greets the lady, upon seeing her for the first time, with a "Good morrow, Kate; for that's your name, I hear." And instantly, with her eyes flashing anger, she reproves him—

"Well have you heard, but something hard of hearing :

They call me Katharine that do talk of me."

Never, it would seem, was wooing more ill-timed nor lady-love more scornful; but it suits the mood of Petruchio, who hurries all the more with his proposition. Bantering her till she writhes with fury, he exclaims—

"You lie, in faith; for you are call'd plain Kate,
And bonny Kate, and sometimes Kate the curst;
But, Kate, the prettiest Kate in Christendom,
Kate of Kate-Hall, my super-dainty Kate,
For dainties are all cates,—and therefore, Kate,
Take this of me, Kate of my consolation;
Hearing thy mildness prais'd in every town,
Thy virtues spoke of, and thy beauty sounded,
(Yet not so deeply as to thee belongs)
Myself am mov'd to woo thee for my wife."

Katharine, as was to be expected, responds—

"Mov'd! in good time: let him that mov'd
you hither,
Remove you hence: I knew you at the first,
You were a moveable."

From here there is a lively interchange of banter and scorn; Petruchio declares that—

"I find you passing gentle.
'Twas told me you were rough, and coy,
and sullen,
And now I find report a very liar;

* * *

Here comes your father: never make denial;
I must and will have Katharine to my wife."

How Kate reviles her parent for wishing her wed to "one half lunatic: a mad-cap ruffian," and how Petruchio only brazenly retorts that all the world who had discussed Kate had talked amiss of her—

"If she be curst, it is for policy,
For she's not froward, but modest as the dove"

--this excellent taming of the shrew, beginning at this most unconventional courtship, is one of the quaintest things in Shakespearean comedy, as the sequel to it is the most charming.

Not more in the realms of fiction, perhaps, than in everyday life is the service of some inanimate object invoked as the medium for a declaration of love when hesitating doubt or bashfulness are hindrances, at the outset at all events, to the plain spoken words. There was, perhaps, nothing very remarkable about Faust's declaration to Margaret or the immediate circumstances attending it; it was in effect what might happen this afternoon in a suburban garden if the couple concerned were fully charged with sentiment. And yet there was something charming about it, which brings one to think of it at once when these dumb mediums and love charms are being suggested. It was the sweet, unhappy Margaret, with her heart already gone out to Faust who, sitting in the garden with him, plucked a star flower and began to pull off the leaves one after the other. "Shall that a nosegay be?" asked Faust. "No, it is just in play," was her coy reply. "How?" he enquires. "Go! you will laugh at me," she rejoins. But she continues to pull off the leaves, murmuring the while.

Faust: What murmurest thou?

Margaret (half aloud): He loves me--loves me not.

Faust: Thou sweet, angelic soul!

Margaret (continuing): Loves me --not-- loves me--not. (*Plucking the last leaf she cries with frank delight*): He loves me!

Faust: Yes, child! and let this blossom-word
For thee be speech divine! He
loves thee!

Ah, know'st thou what it means? He
loves thee!

(*He grasps both her hands*).

Margaret: I'm all a-tremble.

Faust: O tremble not! but let this look,
Let this warm clasp of hands declare
thee

What is unspeakable!

To yield one wholly, and to feel a
rapture

In yielding, that must be eternal!

Eternal!--for the end would be
despair.

No, no,—no ending! no ending!

Then Martha interrupts this pretty love play with the hint that "The night is falling," and, as ever, Mephistopheles' sinister voice is heard, to remind one of the tragedy which looms always about this pair even in these ecstatic moments: "Ay! we must away!"

George Eliot's wonderful power of expressing by the most delicate suggestion the subtleties of human nature was rarely better instanced than in the few pages in which she revealed the overmastering love which suddenly sprang up between Stephen Guest and Maggie Tulliver, the one already affianced to Maggie's best friend, the other practically so to the deformed, but high-souled, Philip Wakem. They had no sooner met than Stephen and Maggie felt that a new and embarrassing influence had entered their lives which they dared hardly acknowledge to themselves, and Stephen ultimately made an unspoken, merely suggested, declaration of love, which, however, was all-sufficient. He never proposed in words, at least not until his desire was well understood and the words were mere entreaty: one felt on reading the book that a formal proposal, even though clothed in the most amatory and romantic phraseology, would have been a vulgar absurdity.

It was the night of the dance at Park House, and Stephen and Maggie, oppressed by the pain of the new situation, were wandering distractedly in the conservatory whilst a waltz was being danced.

They had reached the end of the conservatory, and were obliged to pause and turn. The change of movement brought a new consciousness to Maggie: she blushed deeply,







may really be held to constitute a proposal. Without making any attempt to excuse the conduct of Mr. Pickwick, it must be confessed that but for the fact that a capable jury awarded Mrs. Bardell seven hundred and fifty pounds damages for breach of promise in respect of it, one might have had some hesitation in admitting this one to the category of proposals. In face, however, of the celebrated case of *Bardell v. Pickwick* there is nothing more to be said on this score. Mr. Pickwick *did* propose, and this was how he did it.

Mrs. Bardell was dusting his apartments. Her little boy had gone on an errand for Mr. Pickwick. This gentleman was turning over in his mind the question of the engagement of a valet—the notorious Mr. Samuel Weller. After one or two commonplace remarks he seemed to get to business.

"Mrs. Bardell," said Mr. Pickwick, at the expiration of a few minutes.

"Sir," said Mrs. Bardell again.

"Do you think it's a much greater expense to keep two people than to keep one?"

"La, Mr. Pickwick," said Mrs. Bardell, colouring to the very border of her cap, as she fancied she observed a species of matrimonial twinkle in the eyes of her lodger. "La, Mr. Pickwick; what a question!"

"Well, but *do* you?" inquired Mr. Pickwick.

"That depends——" said Mrs. Bardell, approaching the duster very near to Mr. Pickwick's elbow, which was planted on the table, "that depends a good deal upon the person, you know, Mr. Pickwick; and whether it's a saving and careful person, sir."

"That's very true," said Mr. Pickwick, "but the person I have in my eye (here he looked very hard at Mrs. Bardell), I think, possesses these qualities; and has, moreover, a considerable knowledge of the world, and a great deal of sharpness, Mrs. Bardell, which may be of considerable use to me."

"La, Mr. Pickwick," said Mrs. Bardell, the crimson rising to her cap-border again.

"I do," said Mr. Pickwick, growing energetic, as was his wont in speaking of a subject which interested him, "I do, indeed; and to tell the truth, Mrs. Bardell, I have made up my mind."

"Dear me, sir," exclaimed Mrs. Bardell.

"You'll think it very strange, now," said the amiable Mr. Pickwick, with a good-humoured glance at his companion, "that I never consulted you about this matter, and never even mentioned it till I sent your little boy out this morning—eh?"

Mrs. Bardell could only reply by a look. She had long worshipped Mr. Pickwick at a distance, but here she was, all at once, raised to a pinnacle

to which her wildest and most extravagant hopes had never dared to aspire. Mr. Pickwick was going to propose—a deliberate plan, too—sent her little boy to the Borough, to get him out of the way—how thoughtful—how considerate!

"Well," said Mr. Pickwick, "what do you think?"

"Oh, Mr. Pickwick," said Mrs. Bardell, trembling with agitation, "you're very kind, sir."

"It'll save you a good deal of trouble, won't it?" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Oh, I never thought anything of the trouble, sir," replied Mrs. Bardell; "and, of course, I should take more trouble to please you than ever; but it is so kind of you, Mr. Pickwick, to have so much consideration for my loneliness."

"Ah, to be sure," said Mr. Pickwick, "I never thought of that."

There was just a few more conversational exchanges in this strain when suddenly Mrs. Bardell rose from her chair, and flung her arms round Mr. Pickwick's neck with a cataract of tears and a chorus of sobs. "Oh, you kind, good, playful dear," she said, and while Mr. Pickwick in astonishment cried, "Bless my soul!" and suggested that somebody might come and see them, Mrs. Bardell said, "Let them come." And sure enough there came Mr. Tupman, Mr. Winkle and Mr. Snodgrass; and Mr. Pickwick, "with his lovely burden in his arms, was struck motionless and speechless." It was a most embarrassing situation concerning which it is better to make no comment. It is sufficient to say that Mr. Pickwick maintained that he was talking of his prospective valet all the time; but the jury in *Bardell v. Pickwick* had very little difficulty in coming to the conclusion that he was actually proposing to Mrs. Bardell. We are justified, therefore, in regarding it as a very remarkable proposal.

But in any reflection such as this upon the various and curious styles of love-pledging and marriage-offering which have happened, as far as we know, only in an author's fancy, there can hardly be omitted the weird episode in Mr. Rider Haggard's uncanny *She*, wherein the long-lived, unearthly Ayesha bares her heart to Leo Vincey as he looks upon the still warm body of his wife, from which the life has just been struck by this new wooer. Ayesha, or She, you will remember, who "knew the secrets of the earth and its riches and could turn all things to her uses—who had even for a while overcome Change, that ye call Death," lived on through the ages in the Caves of

Kôr, with her dazzling beauty all unimpaired, waiting for Kallikrates, whom she had lost in the ancient days, to come again and love and be loved.

As she explained to Holly :

"I say to thee that I wait now for one I loved to be born again, and here I tarry till he finds me, knowing of a surety that hither will he come, and that here, and here only, shall he greet me. Why dost thou suppose that I, who am all powerful, I, whose loveliness is more than the Grecian Helen, of whom they used to sing, and whose wisdom is wider—ay, far more wide and deep than the wisdom of Solomon the Wise—why, I say, dost thou think that I herd here with barbarians lower than the beasts? Because I wait for him I love. . . . But the day will come, it may be when five thousand more years have passed, and are lost and melted into the vault of Time, even as the little clouds melt into the gloom of night, or it may be to-morrow, when he, my love, shall be born again, and then, following a law that is stronger than any human plan, he shall find me *here*, where once he knew me, and of a surety his heart will soften towards me, though I sinned against him; ay, even though he know me not again, yet will he love me, if only for my beauty's sake."

The long-awaited-for Kallikrates comes at last in the form of Leo Vincey, who brings with him, however, Ustane, to whom he is wed according to the custom of the Amahagger. Ayesha rescues Leo from death, then literally by a look, kills Ustane, and chooses this moment to plead her suit. To say the least, the occasion does not seem opportune for lovemaking. Leo springs towards Ayesha, but, as if by some magic force, is repulsed.

Then Ayesha spoke. "Forgive me, my guest," she said softly, addressing him, "if I have shocked thee with my justice."

"Forgive thee, thou fiend," roared poor Leo, wringing his hands in his rage and grief. "Forgive thee, thou murderess! By heaven, I will kill thee if I can!"

"Nay, nay," she answered in the same soft voice, "thou dost not understand—the time has come for thee to learn. *Thou art my love, my Kallikrates, my Beautiful, my Strong.* For two thousand years, Kallikrates, have I waited for *thee*, and now at length thou hast come back to me; and as for this woman," pointing to the corpse, "she stood between me and thee, and therefore have I removed her, Kallikrates."

"It is an accursed lie!" said Leo. "My name is not Kallikrates! I am Leo Vincey; my ancestor was Kallikrates—at least, I believe he was."

"Ah, thou sayest it—thine ancestor was Kallikrates, and thou, even thou, art Kallikrates reborn, come back—and mine own dear lord!"

But She exercises her unearthly charm upon Leo, and in spite of himself he succumbs.

"I looked up again," says Holly, "and now her perfect form lay in his arms, and her lips were pressed against his own; and thus, with the corpse of his dead love for an altar, did Leo Vincey plight his troth to her red-handed murderess—plight it for ever and a day."

A Judge of the High Court has recently given such a testimonial to Charles Lever's excellent historical novel, *Charles O'Malley*, as to commend it to the attention of a jury for reading at the first opportunity, and, we remember, the Irish dragoon, who is the hero, pressed his own love suit in a manner somewhat curious in that he did so entirely unknown to himself. Perhaps many a nervous heart would have been glad to have been able to do the same. The battle of Waterloo is but just over, in the story, and there is still the smell of powder in the air. O'Malley, who is secretly and very fervently in love with Lucy Dashwood, a general's daughter, in a moment of confusion, when he had been asked if he were going to be married, signs the name of his lady-love to a military paper, instead of his own. Agitated and distracted, he retreats to a private chamber to curse his luck.

"Oh, Lucy, Lucy!" I exclaimed aloud, "but for you and a few words carelessly spoken, I had never trod the path of ambition, whose end has been the wreck of all my happiness. But for you, I had never loved so fondly; I had never filled my mind with one image which, excluding every other thought, leaves no pleasure but it alone. Yes, Lucy, but for you I should have gone tranquilly down the stream of life with naught of grief or care, save such as are inseparable from the passing chances of mortality; loved, perhaps, and cared for by someone who would have deemed it no disgrace to have linked her fortune to my own. But for you, and I had never been——"

"A soldier, you would say," whispered a soft voice, as a light hand gently touched my shoulder. "I had come to thank you for a gift no gratitude can repay—my father's life; but, truly, I did not think to hear the words you have spoken; nor, having heard them, can I feel their justice. . . . I have followed you in my thoughts across the burning plains of the Peninsula, through the long hours of the march in the dreary nights, even to the battlefield. I have thought of you; I have dreamed of you; I have prayed for you."











of my face. I flatter myself that I gave no sign of astonishment as I bowed over my young friend's hand.

There was no change in the simple charm of her manner, and only once or twice during the evening I detected a hint of abstraction in her clear voice, and saw a shadow in her beautiful eyes that reminded me of the snowy crown above them.

She retired early, and her husband begged me not to go.

As soon as we were comfortably settled, with a spirit stand and a box of choice cigars on the table between us, he said eagerly, "You were astonished, Jolliffe?"

"I am amazed," I answered. "Your wife's beautiful hair——"

"It turned white in a single night," he said. "I'll tell you all about it. I've always had confidence in your judgment. Perhaps you will be able to tell me where nervous fancies end and something else begins."

He lit a cigar, and, after a few puffs, began to speak.

This is as nearly as I can recollect what he said.

"Six weeks ago we attended a sale of jewellery and objects of art in Rome. There were some interesting things in the catalogue, among them several jewels that had belonged to princes of the Roman Church. A rope of pearls was offered, early in the afternoon, that Stella took a great fancy to. The stones were enormous, but their colour and shape were very bad indeed. My wife is fond of barbaric jewellery; there were very few other bidders, and so the string was knocked down to us for a comparatively moderate sum. It was two yards long, and we noticed at the time that the apertures where the stones were threaded were large out of all proportion, and that the slender twist of silk on which they were strung was fashioned in exact imitation of a strong hempen rope. I remember Stella saying to me in fun, 'Why, you could hang a man with it!' That same night we went to a large reception, and Stella wore the pearls. We did not stay very late, and when we got home we sat up a little, as we always do, reading, for we are both very bad sleepers. Soon after a message was sent up from the stables that my favourite saddle horse had been taken ill. I went down at once, and left Stella reading. The poor animal was suffering terribly, but there was

a chance of saving its life. I determined to sit up with it, and sent word to Stella to that effect. Well, a veterinary surgeon was fetched, and he and I watched by my poor 'White Star' all night, but about five o'clock in the morning he had to be shot. As I went upstairs to my room, I noticed that the electric light in my wife's boudoir was still burning, and to my astonishment I saw her reclining in the chair where I had left her, in her ball dress, with all her jewels on. Her head was turned away from me, but I guessed that she had fallen asleep.

"As I walked over to her side, she awoke suddenly and sprang to her feet with a cry of horror such as I never wish to hear again. I shall never forget the expression of her face, nor its ashen pallor, nor the wild, demented light in her eyes. And I could hardly believe my own eyes when I realised that her beautiful hair was as white as it had been black when I left her five hours before.

"She tore from her throat the rope of pearls that we had bought that afternoon, and flung it on the floor. 'They are accursed,' she screamed. 'Take them away! They are red with blood!' I implored her to calm herself, and presently the madness died out of her eyes, and she told me that she had fallen asleep over her book, and had dreamed a frightful dream. She had seen a woman, young and beautiful, and dressed in the fashion of two centuries ago, lying asleep on a couch in a richly-furnished room, a woman round whose white throat was coiled the very rope of pearls that she wore as she slept in a chair in her boudoir at the close of the nineteenth century. She had seen a man enter the room, a man who was also young and richly-dressed in brocade and velvet, with frills of lace and a jewelled sword. She had seen him walk softly up to the sleeping woman and deliberately strangle her by tightening round her throat the pearls that she wore. The woman did not wake; the string of jewels did not snap; it did its deadly work. Stella saw the man leave the room again, silently, softly, with an expression of fiendish exultation on his swarthy face; she saw the dead body roll over and fall face uppermost on the carpet, with glazed eyes staring vacantly at the richly-gilt and painted ceiling, and the pearls showing milk-white against her blackening flesh."

The story was so gruesome, Durance told it so quietly, with such conviction, reproducing the horrible silence of a dream-scene



husband—it was she you saw in your dream. Ever since they have descended in the female line, from mother to daughter, in unbroken succession. A curse was laid on them, and a blessing, too. The curse—that every woman who wore them should die a sudden death; the blessing—that while they were in her possession she should be happy, while she lived. They were given to me on my wedding day by my mother, and stolen from amongst the presents by some clever thief. On the same evening my husband was shot. I was a widow before I had set foot in my new home! I was seventeen that day, now I am an old woman, and all the years that have passed in between I have spent in searching for the pearls, for until I found them I knew there would be no peace for me. And now you, a young and happy woman, have been sent to restore them to me!

“I told her that there was nothing but a handful of white dust and a strand of silk, but she seemed hardly to hear me; she was transfigured, her beautiful face was illumined with a great and radiant brightness. I drove home and came back to her at once with the little box, and as I placed it in her hands I could not help asking her whether she believed that the powdered atoms would really bring her the peace and happiness she had sought all her life.

“‘There is only one happiness for me, my child,’ she answered, with a smile, and I went away silently, for I knew that she meant reunion with her husband beyond the grave. It was quite dark when I left her.”

“October 28th.

“It is too horrible! Something drew me to her house this morning. Her servants told me the terrible news. She was found dead in her bed by her maid. She wanted to die; she longed to join the man she

loved; and yet there is something horrible and mysterious about her death. They tell me there is a smile on her face, but round her throat are distinct marks of strangulation by a series of bead-like objects, and in each of her clenched hands was found a little heap of white dust. They do not mention the silken cord.”

“October 29th.

“There are many rumours afloat as to the manner of the Marchesa’s death. The doctor thinks it most probable that some would-be thief entered the room through the open window and strangled her; but that does not account for the marks of beads deep in the flesh of her throat. I try only to think that she has met the lover of her youth, the husband torn from her side on her wedding day. The silken cord on which the pearls were threaded has been found. Her will was tied up with it; it was made the night before her death, witnessed by her servants. She has left all her money to the poor.”

“November 3rd.

“The hairdresser says that my hair will regain its colour. I am always being asked what I used to bleach it. I don’t feel that I can tell anyone the truth, and, if I did, would they believe it?”

To this I have nothing to add. Was it the power to which we give the name of Fate that guided Stella Durance’s footsteps to that sale-room, that caused her to purchase the pearl necklace, that sent her that horrible dream, and the ever-returning vision of the woman’s face, that made her at last the messenger of peace to a sad and lonely soul who had mourned a lifetime for a youthful love? It is not for me to say. “For now we see through a glass, darkly!”







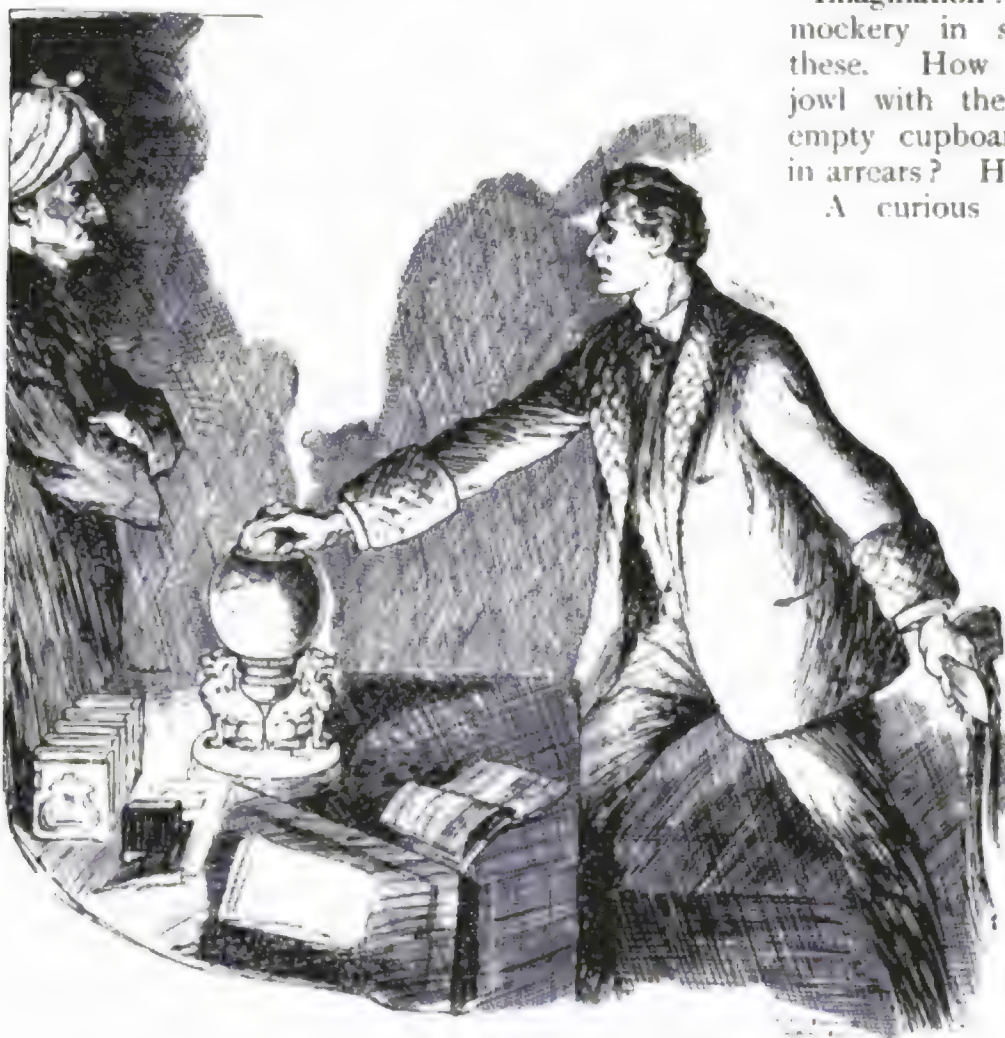


"Hark!" exclaimed Dick, "did you hear a bell?"

"No, sir; what floor, sir?"

"I don't know," answered Dick vaguely, but with the conviction that he had acted for the best, as Mrs. Gobble departed in a whirlwind, as was her custom.

The winter light was fading in the shabby little room as Dick knelt to minister to the wants of the dying fire.



"I will fight you for it," hissed Dick.

From his coat pocket he took a much-worn photograph—the portrait of a young and beautiful girl—and gazed at it tenderly in the flickering firelight.

"Her eyes are as pure as daylight," he murmured. "My little Madge, what chance have I of ever winning you? I, a poor scribbler; you the only daughter of the Bishop of Bellminster!"

He laughed as he spoke, and his laugh sounded mockingly in the darkening room.

Then he sighed and rose to light the candle.

The blue flame of the cheap, sputtering sulphur match glimmered on a pile of

typewritten MSS., from all of which protruded an editorial slip.

"Ah!" mused Dick savagely, "they only differ in the form of their refusals!"

He picked a slip out of the pile and read it.

"Your work shows much ability," ran the slip; "but, unfortunately, your manuscript, which we beg to return herewith, is unsuitable to our purpose. It lacks imagination."

"Imagination!" Dick broke off bitterly.

"Imagination! Its very name is a mockery in such surroundings as these. How can it live cheek by jowl with the stern reality of an empty cupboard and rent a month in arrears? Hullo, what's this?"

A curious object on his table attracted his attention; it was a big jar of unusual shape, covered with dust and cobwebs that the energetic Mrs. Gobble had failed to remove.

It stood over a foot in height and was covered with a big dome-shaped lid, whilst two antique brass lions lifted it at the sides.

"Mrs. Gobble's substitute for my tobacco jar, I suppose," Dick ejaculated. "Well, it's the most curious thing I have ever seen to keep tobacco in. I'll dust it up a bit," and Dick suited

the action to the word, and took off the worst of the cobwebs with the ink-stained sleeve of his old coat.

The dusky bluish-green of the round part of the jar resolved into curiously twined and beautifully painted figures, some flying, whilst hundreds of others became visible when held sideways.

With something of a shock Dick realised that the lions at the side were not brass, but of finest beaten gold, and that the metal dome must be hundreds or perhaps thousands of years old, and that he was looking at a wonderful and priceless early Persian work of art, probably a Persian rose jar.

Within an hour Dick had made two discoveries. There were some forty rose leaves at the bottom of the jar, and their scent was sweeter and stronger than the Bishop's whole rose-garden in summer, and what seemed strange, they had not changed their colour, but appeared to be newly-dropped petals. Yet, reasoned Dick, they must have been shut up ever so long. Moreover, the underneath part of the lid, which had at first appeared to be solid, with brass perforations, was really an openwork box of gold, closed with a spring.

Dick could not find out how to open this, until by an accident he suddenly hit upon the secret. The rose in the centre of the right lion's forehead opened it.

It contained a thin piece of ancient parchment, in an unknown language, also another piece of paper, a translation in Sanscrit, and more rose leaves, only brighter and fresher than the others.

Dick was aware of a curious feeling of dizziness as he reclosed the spring and commenced to translate the second paper. One hour, two hours, three hours, and this is what he read :

Heaven's favourite flower, blown upon by the spicy winds, and scattered in the sacred garden of Azim, destined to be for ever immortal. The desire of kings, the origin of imagination, wherewith the soul of the poet is possessed with ecstasy.

Guarded perpetually in the temple of the priests that the dreams of Azim may be sweet for ever.

Inhale if ye would dream. Eat if your mind would travel in far-lands. Distil if ye would die. Even so, breathe oft if your soul would sing.

For quite twenty minutes by the clock, after reading his translation, Dick sat lost in thought.

The strange mysticism of the East, their legends, customs and powers in magic, passed through his mind ; still he tapped the table absently, and pondered ; he was finding that a healthy English education cannot be forgotten in a few minutes.

The phrase, "the origin of imagination," kept recurring again and again to his mind.

Could he indeed supply, by means of this jar, the imagination he had been told he lacked?

Then Dick deliberately drew the curious Persian rose jar to him, and, opening the spring, he inhaled the perfume of the rose leaves through the little gold grating.

Breathing deeply, he felt as if he were sinking into space, growing into a different being in some other world.

A glorious scent of roses was about him, and his feet touched a path in a strange rose garden, in some beautiful land he had never seen.

The minutes passed, they were only minutes now, then Dick opened his eyes ; for one second he realised he was in his room, then he stretched out his hand for his pen, and wrote on the paper beside him—wrote on for hours.

He was still re-writing and correcting when Mrs. Gobble entered next morning with her usual flourish of brooms and pans, to sweep the room.

"Lor, sir, ain't yer bin ter bed?"

"No," said Dick, "but I have been dreaming all the same, Mrs. Gobble."

"Wot about, sir?" enquired the anxious Mrs. Gobble ; "nothink 'umpy or hunpleasant, I 'ope."

"Oh, no," and Dick smiled ; "you will read my dream, Mrs. Gobble, in a leading London magazine, of which I will give you a copy shortly."

Dick spoke with a new confidence ; he knew the value of the work he held in his hand.

"And, by the way, Mrs. Gobble, I should like to buy this jar of you."

"Didn't I give it ter ye, sir?" asked Mrs. Gobble in an injured tone.

"Yes, but I should like to feel it was really mine. When this is sold," said Dick, indicating the newly-written manuscript he held in his hand, "I will give you half the money I get for it for your jar."

And Dick looked across the room with the air of a man who had conquered—across the room which had seen so many struggles. He knew that he was a rich man. He also knew that he wanted to sleep.

II.

Dick Trent sat writing in his study at Coombe Lawn, the house he had purchased in one of the prettiest corners of Hampshire. The French windows of the room opened upon a wide velvet lawn, with a dark belt of fir trees encircling it.

One year had sufficed to make Dick famous.

The public spoke of him as a writer of marvellous imagination, such as had not existed since the days of Edgar Allan Poe. The critics marvelled at the wonderful insight into Persian and native Indian life displayed in his writings.

His last novel, *An Idyll of Shiraz*, had been the rage of the season. The new story he was now at work upon had already been bought up by a well-known London publisher.

The source of Dick's inspiration, the Persian rose jar, stood on the table by his side, and, as he laid down his pen, he looked at it thoughtfully.

Dick was thinking of his last visit to the Bishop, and the recollection was not of a pleasant nature.

Dick had unburdened the secret of his love for Madge upon that occasion to the Bishop, and his confession had been received with stony disapproval; the Bishop's last words had been that he considered Dick's income as a writer far too precarious to entitle him to regard himself as a suitor to the hand of his daughter.

"Ah," sighed Dick, as he drew a sketch of Madge absent-mindedly upon the blotting paper in front of him, "if my new novel sells as well as the last one, I shall have an income for life; then Madge and I will be able to get married."

And with a smile at the thought of such happiness Dick put away his manuscript and carelessly took up the daily paper upon his desk.

As he turned the paper over, the words, "No. 10, Upper Holland Court," met his eye on the front page.

"My old address," exclaimed Dick, and visions of the half-forgotten Mrs. Gobble rose before his eyes.

"Why, what's this?"

A large sum of money will be given to the present owner of a piece of early Persian pottery, last seen at the above address, if the present owner will bring same to No. 27a, Gray's Inn, London.

A feeling akin to fear seized Dick; somebody else wanted the magic jar then, and knew the value of it, somebody who had perhaps traced it so far, and was getting nearer towards the finding of it every day.

Dick's heart sank when he thought what the loss of the jar would mean to him; he would never be able to write without its aid; he needed it daily for writing his book, the book that was to complete his fame as a writer of romance. To lose the jar would mean to lose fame, to lose Madge—everything. Full of a sudden fear, Dick seized the jar, nearly upsetting the maid-servant who was bringing in afternoon tea, and

carrying it upstairs, locked it in the iron safe in his bedroom, and put the key on his watch-chain.

"I will never lose sight of it, night or day, and I will run no risks," muttered Dick, as he descended to the study, where he followed his usual custom, and fell asleep after his day's work, in the chair in front of his writing table.

During dinner Dick was destined to receive another shock in connection with his Persian rose jar.

Dick's guest, Mr. Scarisbrook, who was a solicitor staying in the neighbourhood, announced his intention of returning to London on the morrow.

"Where is your office in town?" Dick enquired casually.

"27a, Gray's Inn," replied the solicitor.

Dick gave a perceptible start, and remembered the advertisement in the newspaper.

"I have to get back to town," continued the solicitor, "on account of a singular case I have on now, and a still more singular client."

"Something interesting?" queried Dick, and the feverish eagerness with which he asked the question was poorly concealed.

"Very; my client is none other than the celebrated Rajah of Nazwalpore, one of the oldest and richest princes in India. He was recommended to me, and came to consult me about a family heirloom which is lost, but which he means to recover at any cost."

Dick was silent, although he was listening to every word.

"It appears," continued the solicitor, "that some relation, a cousin I think, stole several things of priceless value from the Rajah's palace, about the time the Rajah came of age.

"The cousin contrived to get away to England and, either fearing discovery, or perhaps because he did not know where to take his ill-gotten gains, died in comparative poverty in Upper Holland Court, a sort of slum off the Tottenham Court Road."

"Remarkable," said Dick, "what is the heirloom he desires so much to recover?"

"A Persian rose jar of great antiquity, which has been in their family for over a thousand years, bestowed on the Rajahs of Nazwalpore by the ancient priests of their temple; it possesses some mysterious power, but the Rajah declines to state what it is."

"Of course," enquired Dick, anxiously, "it will never be found?"



columns, and by the time the night had laid down its last purple shadow over the lawn, and the summer twilight had deepened to night, Dick was asleep before his half-opened window. He would not have slept so peacefully if he could have seen a dusky shadow moving across the lawn from between the trees, advancing so stealthily that it could hardly be distinguished from those other shadows that the night had left, but which did no harm. The shadow crept closer to the open window, with a footfall that might have been velvet, soft as the padded paw of an animal.

Closer it came until a dark face was pressed to the outside of the window pane, and two eyes like stars took in every detail of the room, and fell with a flash upon the rose jar standing on the table within reach of Dick's hand.

Thin, but sinuous, brown fingers slid round the casement, opening it enough to admit the figure that almost seemed to dissolve into the room, so subtle was the movement; a hand closed upon the rose jar, and was about to lift it from the table, when Dick awoke with the presentiment that another presence was in the room.

With one pounce he seized the dusky hand across the table with a grip of iron, a grip he had been celebrated for at his University.

In vain the stranger wriggled, Dick's grasp was a vice of steel.

With his other hand he turned on the little button of his electric box lamp on the table. Its sudden illumination showed a curious picture; the two men stood facing each other panting with excitement, with set faces, and the eyes of the Indian glowed like hot coals.

For some seconds they looked into one another's faces without speaking a word, and Dick knew he would have to reckon with a formidable antagonist. Something in the other man's bearing told him he was in the presence of the Rajah of Nazwalpore.

With sudden determination Dick thrust the Indian's hand away, and drew the jar nearer to him.

"I will fight you for it," hissed Dick; "you hear, we will fight for it, here in this room."

"We will fight for it," and the Rajah spoke in his deep voice and curious accent for the first time; "but yet we shall not use any weapon that you know of."

With a feeling of fascination, not unmixed with fear, Dick watched the Rajah touch the rose in the right lion's forehead upon the jar, the lid flew open, the Rajah unfolded the little piece of faded parchment, and took two rose leaves in his hand.

The Rajah pointed to the second sentence; one Dick had not hitherto understood.

"Eat if your soul would travel into far lands," and, as the Rajah read it, he raised his hand and pointed out into the night, towards where his Eastern home was situated.

"To what purpose?" Dick asked, between his clenched teeth.

The Rajah read the face of the man before him like an open book, and made up his mind immediately.

"To this end," he answered, "after what we shall see to-night, you will give me my property of your own free will."

"And if I refuse after what we shall see?" demanded Dick.

Something like a sad smile flitted over the Rajah's face.

"I will make you a present of it," he said.

"How do I know this is not all a trick to get this away from me," Dick burst out; "how do I know that you will not steal away with the jar whilst I am unconscious?"

The Rajah drew himself up, and there was no mistaking the straight way he looked into Dick's eyes.

"Although I have a duty to fulfil at any cost," he answered, "although appearances have been against me, I am a man of honour," he added, proudly. "I shall not leave this apartment until you awaken: my word is given."

The Rajah pushed one of the rose leaves he held towards Dick, and sat down at the opposite side of the table; and without another word each man partook of the bright and sweetly-scented leaf.

For an instant the Indian raised his hand, and uttered something like an incantation in a strange tongue; then each man became unconscious in the chair where he sat in Dick's study.

Dick remembered, long years afterwards, that on this occasion, the last time he ever took one of Azim's sacred rose petals, it was not a dream that came to him as at other times, but a reality: an actual panorama of scenes and events, in which for a time he lived and played a part, as it were, and the scene was the Rajah's glorious palace in India.



"Well?" asked the Rajah briefly.

For answer Dick pushed the rose jar towards him.

"Take it," said Dick, and something suspiciously like tears were in his eyes.

"May *your* God bless you," said the Rajah.

Without another word Dick walked across to the fireplace, and sat down brokenly by the empty grate. He was giving up his career, his future, everything, and he knew it.

The Rajah followed him with his eyes, and a big light akin to pity flamed in them for a moment, then he lifted up his hands as if giving a blessing, took the rose jar and turned at the open window.

"I will make you a rich man," was all he muttered, and for a moment the Indian's dusky figure was silhouetted against the moonlight at the open window ere he turned and disappeared into the night.

IV.

Mrs. Gobble, of No. 10, Upper Holland Court, could not be described as a fair-weather friend, since at the end of three years she had taken Dick back again to his old rooms in his adversity, and patiently waited for the rent he was not able to pay.

"I likes 'im," shrieked Mrs. Gobble, in answer to impertinent enquiries as to if she received any rent from the top floor. "I likes 'im, an' 'e's down on 'is luck, so there; an' don't you worrit 'im."

So saying Mrs. Gobble would bang the door noisily in the faces of importunate creditors.

Poor Dick, he had finished his novel, but the reviews had all been dead against him. A grand start, they had remarked, a hopeless finish.

Gradually it became whispered about that he had outwritten himself; people began to laugh at his work, and editors refused it.

He had long ago sold his expensive house, with all its furniture; the proceeds had kept him for two years; now he was worse off than ever.

"Before another month I shall be starving," groaned Dick. "I swear I cannot go through it again. I shall end it."

And then he thought of Madge, and was ashamed of himself.

Dick never heard from Madge now, her letters to him had ceased, and Dick imagined the worst, and tortured himself with the thought that she had forgotten him.

Although Dick had not received any communication from the Rajah, he never for one instant regretted the feelings that had prompted him to part with his treasured possession, the Persian rose jar.

One must play the game, was the summing up of Dick's philosophy, and what has to be, must be, so there's an end of it.

There was a tap at the door.

"Oh, come in," Dick called out, wearily.

Another tap came, this time slightly louder.

"Why the deuce don't you come in?" yelled Dick.

There was a light footstep on the floor, and Dick turned at the unaccustomed sound.

"Madge!" he shouted in his excitement.

Away went the chair he had been tilting before the fire, and Dick had taken the very pretty girl who had entered the room into his arms and was kissing her.

"Oh, Dick," she exclaimed, when these attentions had ceased, "what a *dreadful* room."

"Yes," replied Dick, "it *was* until you came into it, dear."

Then Madge gravely unfolded a newspaper.

"Haven't you seen the good news?" she asked, and her sweet face was alight with excitement.

"What news?" asked Dick.

Madge held out the paper to him, and pointed to a paragraph, and Dick read:

It is with regret that we announce the death of the Rajah of Nazwarpore, exactly one month after the death of his only son, the last of his famous race. The Rajah's will has excited considerable interest, as he leaves the bulk of his fortune, some thirty thousand a year—together with his two country mansions in England—to the well-known writer, Mr. Richard Trent, whose romances of Persia and India are so well known.

The newspaper dropped from Dick's hand.

"Madge," he faltered, "is this true?"

"Quite," said Madge: "your friend, Mr. Scarisbrook, told me at dinner last night. The will was sent to him; he is the English solicitor to the property."

"But, Madge, do you know what this means?"

"No," replied Madge promptly, "I don't; but as papa is downstairs in the carriage, you had better come down and explain it all to him."

So they went down to the Bishop, hand-in-hand, whilst Mrs. Gobble shouted out directions how to avoid tumbling over a pail of hot water, on the stairs of the second floor.

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*THE DOINGS OF VIGOROUS DAUNT.

THE PAUPER WHO MARRIED A PRINCESS.

By AMBROSE PRATT.

Illustrated by STANLEY L. WOOD.

I.

EXACTLY what circumstances attracted the fickle fancy of my master, Mr. Vigorous Daunt, to the person of the Hon. Edgar Vale I have never been able to determine. The mystery, however, of his subsequent attachment to that handsome young Englishman is not so hard to fathom. We saw Vale for the first time at the Casino at Monte Carlo. Mr. Daunt instantly singled him out from the crowd, and we watched him lose some £5,000 to the bank in a single afternoon. The little brown man openly admired the Hon. Edgar's style of losing his money. Three successive times he said to me "He loses like a prince. I could not do it better myself." Now the fact is that Vigorous Daunt, though many times a millionaire, loses very badly indeed, for which reason he is wise as a serpent and is intimately acquainted with his own limitations: he very seldom gambles. Indeed, he affects to altogether disapprove of gambling, on moral grounds. When Mr. Vale, having played his last stake, rose from the table and sought the gardens, we followed him. That is to say, Vigorous Daunt followed Vale, and I followed Vigorous Daunt.

The Hon. Edgar's magnificent indifference to his ill luck had completely deceived the bank and its attendants, also myself. My master, however, subsequently assured me that he had read Vale's mind like an open book. We came upon the young man, after a smart chase, somewhat abruptly. He was seated on a bench in a lonely little glade gazing down the barrel of a six-shooter. The glint of moonbeams flashing on the bright fittings of the weapon enlivened my intelligence.

Vigorous Daunt halted two paces off and immediately addressed him. "There must be some other way out?" he asked.

The Hon. Edgar looked up languidly; he was a very lethargic young man indeed. Tall, broad-shouldered and good to look upon, it seemed a shame for him to perish before his

time. I had leisure to observe and admire the indolent grace of his demeanour, his finely-chiselled though substantial features, and the perfect cut and fit of his clothes, before he condescended to reply.

"Who the deuce are you?" he asked at last. His language was vigorous, but not his voice. That was indifferent to the last degree. He did not move so much as a hair's-breadth except to glance up at his interlocutor.

"Vigorous Daunt, at your service," replied the little brown man.

"Oh! the millionaire?"

"I am a millionaire," said my master humbly. His humility, however, was a mock. He is the vainest man on earth.

"Well, well," said the Hon. Edgar. "It doesn't matter; please go away, you disturb me."

Vigorous Daunt laughed cheerfully. "There is another way out, Edgar Vale," he said.

Mr. Vale rested his revolver on his knee. "Well!" he drawled, but his voice was interested.

"What do you say to a trip on my yacht; it's out there in the bay. We start at daylight?"

"Where for?"

My master chuckled. "Any place you please."

Mr. Vale shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know," he muttered. "Fancy I'd better chuck the sponge up now. I might not have the nerve another time."

"Rot!" said Vigorous Daunt. "What's the trouble; money?"

"No—that is, not particularly."

"A woman, then?"

"Ah'm," he cleared his throat.

"Hang and curse the whole sex!" cried Vigorous Daunt in a sudden burst of rage. The little brown man is a confirmed misogynist and the mere mention of a woman irritates

him. To my astonishment, the Hon. Edgar, however, did not agree. On the contrary, he sprang to his feet, galvanised into sudden energetic life, and savagely confronted my master.

"How dare you?" he demanded. "How dare you, sir. I've a mind to punch your head."

In his excitement the revolver fell unheeded to the gravel path.

Vigorous Daunt fell back quite disconcerted.

"A woman brought you to this by your own confession," he gasped.

"A woman? An angel!" growled the Hon. Edgar, indescribable scorn and fury struggling for expression in his savage tones.

"H'm," observed my master doubtfully, "I spoke of a woman; of course my remarks bore no application to angels."

"A princess!" cried the young man, and at the word, reverently swinging off his hat, he stood bareheaded, as handsome, brave and devoted a figure as any woman, princess or peasant, could wish to win for her lover. I liked him then and there, ay, and pitied him and admired him, too, in spite of the business we had caught him contemplating. He was every inch a man and desperately in love. He disregarded my master's sneer. I doubt if he had heard it, he seemed indeed to have forgotten our existence, to be wrapped in dreaming of his lady love.

"A princess!" sniffed Vigorous Daunt.

Mr. Vale returned suddenly to earth. Like all men abruptly called from dreamland wandering, he was annoyed, nor did he trouble to conceal his feelings.

"Well," he cried, "what the deuce has that to do with you?"

"Nothing, thank heaven," responded Vigorous Daunt devoutly. "I know one princess, but she is a woman. May the Lord preserve me now and always from the sex. By-the-by, I presume that your princess is defunct?"

Mr. Vale clenched his hands and advanced a step; Vigorous Daunt retreated a similar distance.

"How dare you?" stammered the young man.

"You said she was an angel," protested my master.

Mr. Vale ground his teeth. I confess I sympathised with him. "You impertinent little cad," he grated out.

Vigorous Daunt airily waved his hand. "Come, come, my lad. I only asked in order to assure myself. I perceive that your angel's wings are not entirely feathered yet. Now in my experience until they can fly such creatures are always to be won if they are wanted sufficiently. You would perhaps like to wed your—ahem—angel?"

Mr. Vale gazed at his tormentor for a moment, but made no reply; instead, he relapsed into

his former state of blank dejection. Returning to the bench, he sat down; he even picked up his pistol and gazed at it—a picture of despair.

Vigorous Daunt suddenly advanced, and put a hand upon the young man's shoulder.

"My poor boy," he said—his tones gentle, fatherly and infinitely kind.

"For God's sake leave me," groaned Mr. Vale.

"Did she disdain you?"

"No," he flashed—then groaned again. "God bless her. I was mad. She —," he faltered and hung his head.

"She is a princess—ay?"

"Sir," cried the young man miserably. "Why do you bait me like this?" He suddenly perceived me. "Ah, I see; you are amusing yourself and your friend at my expense." He started wildly to his feet. "But — by —, you'll pay for it." He cocked and raised his revolver.

"Allow me to present my confidential secretary, Captain Rupert Granville—the Hon. Edgar Vale," said Vigorous Daunt. I advanced from the aloe which had shadowed me, and bowed courteously to the desperate young man.

"I am delighted to meet you, Mr. Vale," I said. "Let me assure you of my respect and sympathy. I am as anxious to assist your cause as is my master, whose interest you have been fortunate enough to excite. Let me further assure you that my august master's patronage once enlisted on your side, your cause is by no means so hopeless as you appear to think."

"Well said!" cried Vigorous Daunt. "Granville, you are positively intelligent at times."

The young man stared at us, inexpressibly bewildered, but to my relief he lowered the muzzle of his weapon, which until then had pointed at my heart.

"You—you offer to help me?" he gasped.

"I do," said Vigorous Daunt.

"But what can you do? What can anyone do? Oh, the thing is hopeless."

"Permit me to remind you that my name is Vigorous Daunt!" The little brown man drew himself up with an expression of such owl-like dignity that I had much ado to smother a laugh. I succeeded, however, and added on my own account: "Allow me to inform you, Mr. Vale, lest in your innocence you slight a boon sent direct to you by Providence, that you are offered an ally at whose nod before this a great monarch has submitted to untold indignity. To whatever task my august master addresses his determination, he applies such forces of genius, wealth and superhuman ingenuity that he has long ere this abolished the word 'fail' from his vocabulary."

This pompous declaration, delivered with all the impressiveness that I could master, reduced the Hon. Edgar to a condition of dumb surprise and put the cap to his bewilderment.



Moreover, it touched my vain little master to the heart. Tears of gratification welled up to his eyes, tears, however, which he blinked away with his long lashes, fearing lest his weakness be perceived.

"My dear Rupert," he muttered, "you are almost too outspoken!"

"Not half enough," I protested.

Vigorous Daunt turned to the young man. "Well, what say you?" he demanded.

"I—I'm hanged—I'm blessed if I know!" gasped the Hon. Edgar.

Vigorous Daunt interpreted this dubious acknowledgment in the manner that pleased him best.

"What is the name of the father of the princess?" he queried sharply.

"Eisslingen," said Vale, but next second he bit his lips and turned crimson with mortification. I perceived that the word had slipped from his lips without intention.

"So," observed my master. "The Grand Duke of Eisslingen. I know him. Then your divinity is the Princess Beatrice. If'm, the Grand Duke is a widower, the Baroness Solstein, his sister, guards the fold: an old dragon—but no matter. Where are they now?"

"They left here this morning for Genoa."

"So. Well, we shall leave here for Genoa at daylight to-morrow. They have only one day the advantage of us."

"But," gasped Mr. Vale, "you don't know—the Grand Duke knows—everything—he has forbidden me to address the—the Princess. I was not even allowed to say good-bye to her. She—she—he groaned—went off without a word. At the station she cut me dead."

The young man's tones were despairing, but his eyes were full of piteous entreaty. I saw that he had already commenced to hope.

"So much the better," cried my master cheerily. "A cut direct is a splendid sign."

"But," sighed Mr. Vale, this time his voice utterly hopeless, "still, you don't know all. A marriage has been arranged for her with the Grand Duke of Savony—he is with the party. She dislikes him, but she must obey her father and the Emperor. You see, if she married without the Kaiser's consent the succession would be barred. She is the only child. Oh, it's hopeless, utterly hopeless."

"What do you want," demanded Vigorous Daunt very sharply, "the woman or the succession? Don't dare tell me you would ever exchange your birthright to be a petty little foreign princeling."

"Oh, there's no chance of that," groaned Mr. Vale. "They wouldn't have me if I was made of diamonds."

"Rot! What I want to know is this. If I marry you to the Princess, is there anything that could persuade you to become a German?"

The young man wavered. I knew in my heart that he would always do whatever the Princess wished, but I liked the fellow and wished to help him. If he had said "yes," my master would have washed his hands of him then and there, for Vigorous Daunt, though he pretends to be a cosmopolitan, is at bottom a pugnacious little islander and has a whole-souled contempt for foreigners. Therefore I caught Vale's eye and made a sign to him. Luckily he read it aright—he was waking up.

"Nothing," he cried. "Nothing on earth!"

"Then," said my master with a cynical laugh, "in a month you will be married to your princess. Now, attention. Return immediately to your hotel, pack up your traps and bring them to the pier. We shall await you there. For the present, good-bye—forward—march!"

Mr. Vale put his revolver in his pocket, saluted and departed. All traces of dejection had vanished from his person. He strode off a new man, full of vigour, life and hope. Vigorous Daunt turned presently to me. "Ah," he murmured, heaving a deep sigh, "at present that young fellow regards me as his saviour. Six months hence he will class me with his cruellest enemies. Oh, woman, woman!"

II.

The Hon. Edgar Vale very soon gave evidence that nature had not been niggardly in supplying him with brains, and this fact surprised me, for though I am personally readily susceptible to the charms of the fair sex, I had always previously regarded a man capable of losing his head in a love affair as something like an imbecile. The Hon. Edgar, however, had not spent a day aboard the *Narcissus* before he had thoroughly taken stock of his surroundings, gauged my status and my influence over Vigorous Daunt, and had fairly accurately divined the character of my master himself. He proceeded to act accordingly. He first made friends with me (I may state that I yielded him my friendship quite ungrudgingly) and then, on my advice, he set himself resolutely to work to ingratiate himself with Vigorous Daunt.

He patiently pandered to all the little brown man's whims and idiosyncrasies and invented opportunities to feed his hungry vanity. Vigorous Daunt accepted these attentions suspiciously at first, but he could not long resist the young man's artless and frankly uttered flatteries, nor remain proof against his evidently sincere desire to please. In spite of himself he gradually thawed, and when Mr. Vale came down to dinner clad from head to heel in *brown* the compliment to his colour predilection so enchanted him that he took the young man to his heart, metaphorically—*bien entendu*. Thenceforward the voyage passed

for the most part like a pleasant dream without a single unpleasant incident. For although Mr. Vale was not by any means happy—he was so deeply in love, so lately rescued from despair—yet he contrived to appear so gay when Vigorous Daunt was present that my respect for him hourly increased. When alone with me it is true that he sometimes surrendered to despondent fits. Once, indeed, he gave way completely and wept like an infant, but I soothed him at such times with tales of my master's wonderful achievements, and inspired him with such faith in the little brown man's undoubted genius that these fits grew rapidly less frequent. His chief trouble was that Vigorous Daunt not only forbade all mention of the subject which now engaged all our thoughts, but also resolutely declined to disclose or discuss the plan of campaign which he intended presently to institute. I am inclined to believe that my master divined the young man's secret agony of impatience, and perhaps revelled in the importance of a position he had assumed which so ministered to his vanity. But Vale's self-control was so complete that his liking for him developed in three days to a positive affection, for next to genius the little brown man admired, above all things, strength of mind. Nevertheless, he did not once relent, and we arrived in Genoa in absolute ignorance of Vigorous Daunt's intentions. We, I say advisedly, because in the light of after events I believe that my master had so far formed no plan at all, but had resolved to trust chance with the furthering of his new friend's interests.

An hour after we had dropped anchor the little brown man went ashore accompanied by his cook, three valets, and a great mass of baggage, having ordered us to await his commands on board the yacht. The next four-and-twenty hours comprised a period to which I assign an important place in the list of my unpleasant recollections.

The Hon. Edgar fretted and fumed to such an extent, indeed, he behaved so much in the fashion of an ungoverned child, that I not only lost my night's rest, but several times we were on the verge of quarrelling, and he would have broken into open revolt, defied Vigorous Daunt's orders and gone ashore, had I not informed him very plainly that in such case he had far better have committed suicide in Monaco, since thereby he would not have made my master his enemy. His reply was most intemperate, but considering his state of mind I excused him, and to do him justice he subsequently made me a most handsome apology. Next morning, an hour before noon, there came to the yacht a messenger with a letter from Vigorous Daunt. Never was a visitor as welcome. In very gratitude and relief (my temper was by that time worn to shreds) I treated the fellow to champagne and then,

retiring with Mr. Vale to my cabin, opened the letter, not a difficult matter, for it was unfastened. It ran as follows:—

To the Hon. The Earl of Killiecrankie.

MY LORD,

I have taken for your Lordship the best villa I could discover for your Lordship's purpose. It is situated on Spianola Hill, and immediately overlooks the villa of His Grace, the Duca di Spezzia, who is at present entertaining the party of His Highness the Grand Duke of Eisslingen. I have faithfully obeyed your Lordship's order to maintain the incognito of H.R.H. (these letters were half erased) the Hon. the Earl of Beaufort, but I regret to inform your Lordship that a whisper of his identity has got abroad. Last evening I was unfortunate enough to meet the Grand Duke of Eisslingen face to face, and he taxing me on the matter, I fear has been confirmed in his suspicions by my prevarications. I implore your Lordship to excuse me, but, unless by deliberate falsehood, the matter could not have been evaded. The messenger who bears this letter to your Lordship is a servant of the Grand Duke whom he has kindly lent me. I have the honour to inform you that the Villa Spianola will be quite prepared to receive your Lordship within an hour of the courier's departure from the yacht. I have ordered a closed carriage to await your Lordship's convenience at the Seneca Quay, aware that your Lordship's desire is to avoid publicity (this last sentence was scrawled in Russian). I have the honour to be,

Your Lordship's humble servant and secretary,

VIGOROUS DAUNT.

After reading this precious epistle aloud, I glanced at Mr. Vale. The poor young man was gasping like a fish out of water.

"What does it all mean, Granville?" he demanded. "Has the man gone mad?"

"Excuse me, Mr. Vale, my name is Killiecrankie. Will you do me the favour not to forget it, and the fact that I am an earl—a belted earl."

He glared at me, dazed clean out of his wits. "You're mad, too," he growled.

"Read between the lines, use your brains, man, use your brains," I cried. Vigorous Daunt had often addressed me in just such language. I now comprehended his delight in doing so. I also understood the reason why a man who is kicked by his master, if he can, consoles himself by kicking an understrapper. At that moment I experienced one of the purest joys on earth.

Mr. Vale snatched the letter from my hands, and pored over it for many minutes. In the meantime I went out and directed our courier to be put immediately ashore. On my return Mr. Vale appeared preoccupied but intelligent.

"Well?" I demanded.

He turned to me, his great blue eyes open wide. "I see," he cried.

"Indeed, what?"

"You are to personate an earl. Vigorous Daunt will be by turns himself—that is to say your secretary—and some royal or princely personage. Am I right?"

"Perfectly. I make you my compliments on your sagacity."

"But where do I come in?"

"You will be—the Hon. Edgar Vale—my guest, and the friend of that same royal or princely personage."

III.

Some hours later, I, the Earl of Killiecrankie, entertained at lunch in my villa on Spianola Hill, my friend, the Hon. Edgar Vale, and my secretary, Mr. Vigorous Daunt. It was a silent function. Vigorous Daunt only once opened his lips—he said, addressing me, “My lord, it was reported in yesterday’s local papers that His Royal Highness Prince Schlesinger, being rather poorly, has left the capital for Scotland, where he intends to remain for an indefinite period. This morning’s telegrams have confirmed the report.”

I looked up and met the little brown man’s eyes. He was smiling meaningly. I understood and shrugged my shoulders in response. Mr. Vale also grasped the situation, but quite unused to such ideas the poor young man seemed ready to expire from terror, and during the remainder of the meal he did little else but mop his brow, which was always dripping with perspiration, from the nervous fires of trepidation that consumed him.

After lunch Vigorous Daunt took my arm and led me to the garden. The Villa Spianola occupied the entire crest of one of those beautiful though bare hills that overlook Genoa and its harbour. Adjoining the grounds and magnificent gardens of the Villa, on the south was perched, on the knees of the hill, a large and pretentious mansion, decorated on the exterior with all the florid forms of the Florentine school of architecture. Vigorous Daunt indicated this mansion with a nod. “It is the Villa Spezzia,” he remarked, significantly.

“I had guessed it,” I replied. “But where is Vale?”

“Probably pacing his room like a lion in his cage.”

“You must treat him tenderly; his patience is exhausted.”

“H’m. Did he give you much trouble after I left the yacht?”

“He did; can’t you manage to confide in him a little?”

“No—he is too impetuous. He would inevitably spoil my plans.”

“May I know your plans?”

“This much of them: you and Vale must obey me implicitly. No more. By the way, the Duke of Spezzia, the Grand Duke of Savony and the Grand Duke of Eisslingen will call here at four o’clock to visit you and pay their respects to the Earl of Beaufort.”

“So soon?”

“You will be good enough to invite them here this evening. I shall play piquet with Eisslingen, you must entertain the others with baccarat; contrive to lose. I wish them to like you.”

“Very good, but what of Vale?”

“He shall enter the room on my arm. I shall attend to him.”

Vigorous Daunt then left me, and I spent a very pleasant hour enjoying the scene and an excellent cigar. I subsequently returned to the house and spent a correspondingly unpleasant period instructing Vale in the arts of patience and obedience. Proximity to his fiancée had inspired him with an unreasoning mania of restlessness, and it required an almost saintly charity to forbear with him.

At four precisely, our princely visitors arrived. The Grand Duke of Eisslingen was a little old man who rejoiced in a luxuriant white moustache and long Dundreary whiskers. I read him as a man of the old school, intemperate of habit, choleric of disposition and proud as Lucifer. The Duke of Spezzia was a long and lean middle-aged Italian, chiefly remarkable for his elegant manners, and an affectation of excessive sprightliness. In reality he was a thoughtful creature who had written a text book on metaphysics, and had already buried four wives. The Grand Duke of Savony was not remarkable at all. A small, portly German, with a heavy face and bleared eyes, he exhibited no indication of his princely birth, but looked what he was, a roué and dissolute young man of twenty-nine. One glance at him inspired me with a profound pity for the Princess Beatrice. With such a man for a prospective husband, any sensitive young woman could be excused for eloping with a decent-looking groom.

Vigorous Daunt, *in propria persona*, presented my guests to me in the drawing-room, a stately chamber, fully sixty feet long by thirty wide.

I flatter myself that no belted earl living could have received them with finer tact, or have more nicely observed and marked in his manner the distinctions in their respective age and rank. I bore myself so well, indeed, that one and all unmistakably approved me. Their enquiries concerning “His Royal Highness” I replied to in such a way as to establish their preconceived convictions, even though I corrected their speech and emphatically protested that my friend the Earl of Beaufort was nothing more than a plain English gentleman. My visitors stayed only long enough to accept my invitation (which they regarded as a command) for the evening, and to refresh themselves, whereupon they immediately retired.

During the remainder of that afternoon Vigorous Daunt appeared no more, and Vale and I were even constrained to dine without him. The Hon. Edgar, I regret to say, drank a great deal of champagne, and though his spirits were thereby enlivened, he still remained so excessively nervous and irritable that I was hard put to it to manage him. At eight forty-five Vigorous Daunt sent for him, leaving me to receive our guests alone.

They arrived punctually and I led them to the card-room, where, however, I could prevail upon no one to be seated. Vigorous Daunt kept us waiting about five minutes.

When finally he entered the room, leaning confidentially upon the Hon. Edgar's arm, in spite of my previous acquaintance with his intention, I could scarcely suppress a cry of admiration and astonishment. It was Prince Schlesinger himself. Indeed, seldom, if ever, could the Prince have appeared as like his fabled self, so princely, so royally condescending, so graciously good humoured. My guests verbally respected his incognito, but they paid him every attention exigible by Royalty. His Royal Highness speedily put them all at ease and proved that the world-famed reports of his marvellously retentive memory were by no means exaggerated. "Come, come," he said at last, "this is a card party; let us have done with chattering and get to work." He turned to Eisslingen. "Your Highness" he emphasised the title, "it runs in my head that you owe me some reparation at picquet. Am I not right?"

"I shall be charmed — my lord," stammered the old Duke.

"Good. Edgar, will you score for us?" This to Vale.

The Hon. Edgar, who had so far remained in the background, came forward. "I'd rather play, old chap, if you don't mind," he answered. His face was a little flushed, but on the whole he appeared self-confident and he spoke without hesitation. I had never hoped that he would make so fine an actor; evidently my master had given him a sharp talking to. His "old chap" made the whole room stare. The Grand Duke of Eisslingen was rigid with astonishment and positively glared at the young fellow.

"Come, come," protested the counterfeit Prince. "You are too fond of play; a night off will do you good, you young rascal."

"My dear Albert, a night off would do you no harm," retorted Vale with consummate insolence. If the ducal party were before surprised, they were now aghast.

Conceive their state of mind when the Prince replied, "Perhaps you are right, lad, but then I haven't your bad luck, and even if I had, my means could not support it. Come, lad, score for us to please me!" Vale gave way with the worst grace possible, and even seated himself before the Prince.

My master smiled at me over his shoulder. "Well, Cranky, what about the others; baccarat, eh?"

I bowed deeply and invited Savony and Spezzia to be seated. I heard my master observe to Eisslingen: "A splendid fellow, Killiecrankie, one of the best. I call him 'Cranky' because he is excessively good-tempered."

The little brown man need not have counselled me to lose; I was so keen set on observing the picquet party that if my adversaries had not been similarly interested I should have lost a fortune, for the stakes were high.

From the first Vigorous Daunt commenced to win. This fact established his good humour. His sparkling spirits kept everyone engaged. He chaffed Vale mercilessly at intervals, told several racy stories and ceaselessly tossed the ball of conversation up and down the room. The Hon. Edgar wore the only gloomy face. He sat as sulky and silent as a bear, and several times was insolently familiar with the Prince. Gradually, however, he, too, thawed, and at last joined in the general mirth excited by a story recounted by my wonderful little master. On this the counterfeit Prince patted his arm affectionately and told him he was a "good, forgiving creature." Shortly afterwards the Grand Duke of Eisslingen, probably overcome by the brandies he continually absorbed, was unable to persist in enmity with a man so kindly considered by a prince of the blood. He actually addressed Vale, and before midnight they seemed the best friends in the world. At one o'clock my master arose, and assuming the privilege of royalty, retired before my guests, after bidding them all dine with us on the following evening and especially requesting Eisslingen to bring his daughter, the Princess Beatrice, whose acquaintance he declared he wished to make.

When I visited Vigorous Daunt he met me with these words: "How much did you lose?"

"Two hundred pounds," said I.

"Enough," he cried, "lose no more. This adventure will cost me dearer than any yet! How much do you think young Vale is worth?"

"I have no idea."

"Scarcely a sou — a bare £300 a year, and he dared make love to a princess! If it were not for the sake of my democratic principles and my hatred of women I'd drop him like a hot coal."

"How do you mean?"

"Why, he's a younger son and can never hope to get the title. My only recompense in this affair is the consciousness of doing good. These confounded aristocrats! I'll teach them! I'll level their pride a little. I'll marry their daughter princess to a common pauper!"

"Supposing the Princess declines?" I queried. I was not disturbed by his threat. I knew that he would treat Vale handsomely.

"She won't. Vale showed me her letters. She wants him — curse her! He's too good for her, much too good. Did you mark the way he shaped to-night? The fellow has brains, I tell you."

"You haven't seen the Princess," I objected.

"Isn't she a woman?"

"Why do you hate the sex so bitterly?"

"Good-night, Granville. Go to bed."

IV.

I disobeyed my master. Instead of going to bed I went to Vale and said to him, "Write a letter to your Princess, Vale, and implore her to come here to-morrow night dressed in brown; it's most important that Daunt's first impression of her flatters him."

Vale wrung my hand and wrote the letter. It cost me five pounds to ensure its private safe delivery. The whole of the next day Vigorous Daunt spent in the city of Genoa engaged in some mysterious business, while I ministered to the anxieties of a disconsolate young lover. As the hour appointed for the eventful dinner party approached poor Vale's distress of mind increased to the point of agony. I was obliged to button his collar and fix his tie, his trembling hands having refused the office. As we proceeded to the reception room I thought he would faint, and no one had yet arrived. We found, however, the counterfeit Prince awaiting us. Noticing Vale's agitation, my master addressed him very sternly and with effect, indeed, his biting words would have stung a frog to indignation.

I watched Vigorous Daunt's face as the Princess entered. I noted that he slightly started and his eyes flashed suddenly. Glancing then at the Princess I became lost to all else.

She was clad from head to heel in brown and wore a sprig of wallflower in her hair. She was lovely and lovable rather than beautiful; a trifle under the medium height, she nevertheless carried herself with distinction. Her figure was absolutely perfect. Her face was pure but passionate. I saw a broad low brow, a full sweet mouth, a small imperfect nose, an adorable dimpled chin; I withstood these attractions; I confess her ivory complexion disturbed my fortitude, but I surrendered to her eyes. They were large and langorous, exquisitely shaped, and their colour was molten gold, though sepia bars radiated from the pupils.

The Prince took her into dinner. I gave my arm to the Baroness Solstein, a fat and too-well-preserved old woman of fifty-five. The Hon. Edgar held the door open for the Princess to pass through. I watched her keenly, she did not look at her lover, but for a moment she was white as death.

Had she merely blushed I should not have been half satisfied. I now felt sure that Vale was loved. The dinner passed as I imagine such functions must at truly royal tables. To my mind it was rather dull, although my master exerted himself to please, and I seconded his efforts to the extent of my ability. The fact was, secret counter influences were at work which I easily divined and detected. The Baroness highly disapproved of Mr. Vale. The Grand Duke of Eisslingen was preoccupied and uneasy; he, no doubt, had been rated

beforehand for his folly in countenancing Vale after cutting his acquaintance. Vale himself was unable to tear his eyes from the Princess's face, and the Princess, though apparently composed, betrayed the agitation of her thoughts by frequently blushing and paling. The conversation was confined to the Prince, Savony, Spezzia and myself. The others listened and dutifully laughed as the occasion demanded. I was inexpressibly relieved when the banquet came to an end. The ladies did not retire before us, but we all unceremoniously repaired to the card-room, where the counterfeit Prince declared for baccarat and directly challenged the Baroness to play. It is said that all old women are gamblers—certainly the Baroness proved no exception to the rule. She acquiesced and took a chair regardless of her protégée, who, declining to play, asked leave to watch the game. My master, when about to deal the cards, looked suddenly at Vale.

"My dear Edgar," he said sternly, "I must say I admire your chivalry. Are you such a gambler that you prefer to play with us old fogies, pardon me Baroness (she bowed laughingly to her) to entertaining our beautiful young friend here, who would doubtless enjoy a stroll on the terraces by moonlight? Be off with you this instant, sir!"

The speech was a bombshell. The Baroness turned pale. The Grand Duke turned purple. Even the sluggish-blooded Savony changed colour. But the counterfeit Prince noticed nothing. His victims were like rats caught in a trap. No escape was possible. Vale got up and offered the Princess his arm. The Baroness looked daggers at the pair and declared that the Princess would catch cold. She was the only one who even dared to protest, but my master laughingly overruled her and Vale hurried his charge off. They were absent the greater part of an hour, and when they returned, my master, who had lost £400, threw up the game. Spezzia, who had won largely, begged the Prince and myself to dine next evening at the Villa Spezzia, promising then to give the Prince his revenge, but I noticed he did not include Vale in the invitation. I attended our princely guests as far as the gate; even before I took my leave the Baroness had commenced in a whisper to scold the Princess, and one glance at Eisslingen's face assured me that the poor lady could expect little quarter from him.

Returning to the house I found Vigorous Daunt and the Hon. Edgar most unamiably confronted. My master turned furiously to me.

"Do you know what this young idiot, this ingrate, has done?" he cried.

I shook my head.

"He has taken the matter out of my hands! Clipped my wings and made a fool of me!"

"How?"



"He has asked the Princess to elope with him."

"And she?" I asked, utterly confounded.

"Has agreed to feign illness and meet him during dinner hour to-morrow night, whereupon she will fly to the yacht with him."

"Well, well," I gasped, "that, after all, is not so bad. It seems we are emerging from the wood. What is there to grumble at?"

Tears of rage stood in my master's eyes. His voice broke. "Don't you see," he wailed, "the wretched creatures have anticipated ME. It was my plan, *mine*—now—he—he—" (he fairly shrieked the words) "will get all the credit. The Princess will look upon me merely as a servant in the matter."

Here Mr. Vale spoke out excitedly. "That is nonsense. I told her it was your wish. Besides——"

"Bah," snapped Vigorous Daunt. "She is in love; don't you assume to flatter my intelligence. I know that she'll attribute all the glory to you."

I attempted to pour oil on the waters. "After all," I murmured, "she is only a woman, sir. You don't really care what she thinks!"

"You shut up," he roared. "As for you, Edgar Vale, you'll bitterly repent your insolent presumption. The girl's a dashed sight too good for you," he inconsequently added.

"She's an angel," sighed Vale in a whisper.

"If she weds—you—IF, I say—she will avenge me—but I'll punish you in any case myself."

"How?"

"Wait—you'll know to-morrow night. Leave me!"

"Excuse me, sir," the young man hesitated, "have I—er—permission to proceed with—YOUR plan?"

Vigorous Daunt's eyes softened, but not his manner. "You have," he growled.

"Sir," said Vale, "I thank you from the bottom of my soul. Good-night."

"Go!" said Vigorous Daunt. When the door had closed, my master turned to me.

"Have you," he muttered, "ever seen a finer, a better-matched couple? No, I'll be sworn you haven't. Nevertheless, the fellow is a rascal. I'll see he does her justice—ay—to the letter. I'll make him!"

I could not repress a sneer. "Milogynist!" I muttered.

Vigorous Daunt blushed furiously, then burst out laughing. "That's why I loathe the sex, Rupert, lad. They can do anything with me. Why, hang it, I'm ready to marry that girl myself."

"God forbid!" I cried. "I don't want to lose my master yet."

He looked me in the eyes, smiling kindly. "No, nor I you, boy."

It was at moments such as this that I best loved the little brown man.

V.

Next day Vigorous Daunt went to the city and visited his yacht. Mr. Vale shut himself up in his bedroom, and I only saw him at meals. He was extremely gloomy and taciturn, and refused my twice-proffered company. I spent a quiet time, smoking and reading until about four, when a servant informed me that the Grand Duke of Savony requested private audience.

Wondering what on earth that dull and dreary person required of me, I proceeded to the reception-room. Savony was nervous and hesitating, but quickly tiring of his polite enquiries and weather drivel, I drove him to the issue. "What is the matter?" I demanded suddenly. "You haven't come here to discuss meteorology."

He turned positively pale and stammered, "It's Mr. Vale—my lord."

"Well, what of him?"

He floundered hopelessly awhile, nor did I assist him, but presently he blurted out, "We—that is, Eisslingen and the—Baroness—don't want him. The fact is—he—he—some time ago—he insulted the Princess—and since then——" words failed him.

"Well?"

"We—that is, Eisslingen thinks—you see he is such a friend of the Prince—they imagine that His Royal Highness might (unacquainted with the facts) take him to the Villa Spezzia this evening."

"Ah."

"So—they thought that if I spoke to you—I beg your pardon, my lord, for reflecting on a guest and possibly a friend of yours—but you see how I am situated."

"Perfectly, your Highness; please say no more. I shall arrange the matter to your satisfaction and without annoying His Royal Highness, who has a great affection for Mr. Vale. Will that content you?"

"My lord, I am greatly your debtor."

"I shall make an excuse to send Mr. Vale to Ripalo by this evening's train. Fortunately, it will be easy, as His Royal Highness proceeds there to-morrow; he will thus be quite out of the way."

The Grand Duke's dreary face became perceptibly less somnolent. He protested his gratitude and made an early excuse to leave, doubtless anxious to convey such good news to his friends. When I informed Vigorous Daunt of this interview he was highly pleased and belauded my discretion to the skies.

My master spent an hour in private converse with Mr. Vale, and at eight o'clock presented himself with me at the door of the Villa Spezzia. Our noble hosts received us with so exaggerated a display of ceremonious courtesies that I became vaguely disquieted. I could not tell

why, but it seemed to me that the atmosphere was ironically tainted. My master, however, appeared absolutely at his ease, and with an effort I imitated his unconcerned demeanour. The Baroness in particular excited my attention by her slavish deference to the counterfeit Prince. Twice I caught her eyes, and their glance was hostile. I confess I grew alarmed. I became conscious that every word my master uttered, every movement he made, was observed and criticised, so also, but in a minor fashion, with myself. I prepared myself for battle and vainly longed to give Vigorous Daunt a hint to do likewise, but not once could I catch his eyes. He laughed and jested with each in turn and bore himself as if he had not a care in the world; me only he ignored. He took the Baroness in to dinner, and exerting all his genius to please, for the first half-hour kept the table in an uproar of mirth, no inconsiderable feat when it is remembered that three of the party were stolid Germans, whose suspicions, I felt in my heart, were wide awake.

The Princess Beatrice was absent, but no one accounted therefor, and my master seemed to have forgotten her existence. The first lull occurred with the arrival of the *pièce de résistance*. Against all courtly precedent, a lackey entered and presented, on a golden salver, a telegram to the Baroness. Muttering an apology to the Prince, she tore it open, glanced at its contents and then passed it to the Grand Duke of Eisslingen.

"The bolt is about to fall," I muttered, and glanced at the Baroness. She, in common with the rest of the table, was gazing at my master.

She opened her lips to speak. The bolt fell. "My dear sir," she said smoothly, "I have learned from indisputable authority that His Royal Highness Prince Schlesinger is on his way to accept and enjoy the hospitality of Cannes. You are not the Earl of Beaufort, there is no such person; your friend (she bowed to me) is not the Earl of Killiecrankie, there is no such person. Will you, then, be good enough to inform us whom we have the honour to entertain?"

The Grand Dukes of Eisslingen and Savony rose to their feet. There was no mistake about their hostility now, their eyes were fairly on fire. My master waved his hand and pointed to the servants. The Duke of Spezzia gave a sharp order, getting to his feet as he spoke. Instantly the room was cleared. The three men glared at my master, waiting, tremulous with rage, for him to speak.

My master turned to me. "I am a misogynist again!" he murmured. His coolness was sublime. The Baroness, appropriating the sneer, coloured through her rouge.

My master pointed his index finger at the Grand Duke of Eisslingen. "Permit me to

remind you, sir," he haughtily exclaimed, "that I am still seated!"

His ringing accents, stern yet cold, more than that, his superlative assurance, absolutely petrified his audience. The silence that followed was of the tomb.

My master broke it. "Must I remind you again?" he demanded. His eyes dominated theirs. They changed colour—they sat down, incredible as it may appear—they sat down! My master immediately stood up. He looked every inch a king. The whole table, even the Baroness, deferentially arose.

"His Royal Highness Prince Schlesinger," said my master, icily, "is now on his way to Cannes, where, for the benefit of stupid people, he will emerge from his incognito. He is accompanied by his friend, Mr. Rupert Granville, who, he has promised, shall one day be the Earl—yes, madam—he looked the Baroness in the face) the Earl of Killiecrankie. Cranky, man,"—he gave me a sweet smile—"your arm!"

I hurried to his side. Taking my arm, after nodding curtly to the astounded assembly, my master walked me to the door. Instantly a storm of protestations arose. Eisslingen, old as he was, flew to the door and put his back against it. The Baroness burst out sobbing; Savony shook like a blanc-mange. Spezzia called upon God to witness—more stupidities than I can recollect. My master calmly asked me the time, then ironically observing that the hour was not yet, permitted himself to be mollified.

The Baroness kissed his hand and entreated pardon. He sat down again, and like the genius he was and is, without a second's pause plunged into the relation of a story, which, from its monstrous absurdity, would have moved an anchorite to tears. His marvellous ability was once more demonstrated when an hour later we rose from the table. He then declined all invitations to play and took leave of his guests in such a manner as to oblige them to perceive that although he had pardoned their offence, he had by no means forgotten it. Their slavish adulation, their abject contrition I shall not forget till the last hour of my life. We found upon enquiry at the Villa Spianola that Mr. Vale had long departed in a carriage for the yacht. We therefore immediately followed his example. I perceived as we rowed off that the yacht's anchor was raised and that she was under steam. In the saloon were seated at one end the Hon. Edgar and the Princess Beatrice; at the other an Italian priest paced up and down reading his breviary.

The Princess, who was clad in brown velvet, was very pale, but her eyes glowed brilliantly.

Vale watched her hungrily from a little distance, an indescribable expression of love, longing and anxiety upon his face. On our entrance he looked up and started crouchingly,

every muscle strained as though about to spring at our throats. A revolver rested near him on the lounge, but concealed by his body from the Princess. He reminded me of a jealous tiger defending his mate.

My master closed and locked the door behind him, then, pushing past the priest, he advanced straight to the Princess.

"Madam," he said, "have you considered the consequences of your act?"

She smiled brightly, looking him bravely in the eyes. "I have," she replied.

"You will forfeit the succession," said Vigorous Daunt. "You will lose father, friends, fortune, state!"

"It is true," she said.

My master frowned. "You resign these things—for what?"

The Princess extended her left hand to Vale. "For my husband's love," she answered proudly.

My master's frown grew black as night; he pointed at Vale and in a withering voice cried out: "Your husband will be a pauper. He is deeply in debt—he has barely £300 a year. Retract before it is too late. If you wed him you will starve! Remember, you are a princess!"

The Princess drew herself to her full height; her glorious eyes flashed.

"Once!" she cried, "but I am now a woman!"

Vale uttered an inarticulate cry; he sprang to his feet and put an arm about his fiancée's waist. "An angel, whose shoes I am not fit to kiss," he muttered brokenly.

"But whom you aspire to marry!" snapped Vigorous Daunt. He turned to the Princess. "I see what it is, madam, you rely upon my protection, my generosity. You think I am Prince Schlesinger and that I shall intercede for you and accomplish your father's pardon." With a swift gesture he tore off his wig and beard. "Perceive now your mistake! I am plain Mr. Daunt, a nobody!"

The Princess smiled. "I knew," she said. Suddenly she withdrew from her lover and swiftly advancing put both her hands upon my master's shoulders. "But do not say a nobody, dear Mr. Daunt—you are my husband's friend, and my dear friend; dear friend indeed, since to you I owe—my happiness!"

The little brown man for a moment stood stock still as if stupened, then of a sudden, rudely starting back, he turned and glared at Vale. "Very good, young sir," he grated out in English, "you have tricked and mocked me! Have your laugh; I shall laugh afterwards. Let me tell you this—this woman will avenge me. Wait—wait, I say, until you want a night

out!" With this dreadful threat and a hollow laugh my master swung on his heel and beckoned to the priest, who hurried up. "Marry them! Marry them!" he growled in Italian, "and no furbelows on the ceremony! Make haste!"

The lovers sank on their knees; the priest set to work, and in ten minutes the Princess Beatrice was Mrs. Vale, and her marriage lines were bestowed in the bosom of her gown.

The Hon. Edgar would have taken her in his arms, but my master was before him. The little brown man pushed him aside, and bending over the girl he kissed her on the forehead. "My dear," he said gravely, "I wish you every happiness." The Princess stood up, her face rosy, her eyes alight. I heaved a sigh to see her, she was so lovely, so altogether desirable a creature.

Vigorous Daunt offered her an envelope. "It is my wedding gift," he said and moved away.

The girl, with a little delighted cry, tore it open, looked and read. Suddenly, tears came into her eyes, her hands fell to her sides and a paper fluttered to the floor.

I picked it up and handed it to Vale. It was a cheque for £50,000.

The young man made an effort, a gallant effort, to restrain himself, then failing, turned his back, his big frame heaving with sobs. The Princess stood petrified, gazing through her tears after my master, who had already reached the door. There he turned and addressed Vale. "Mr. Vale, you start in five minutes for Malta," he announced. "When you have done with my yacht, a month or two hence, kindly cable me to the Colonnade in London. Come, Granville!" I started forward and accompanied my master from the room. Vale never moved. My last glimpse of the Princess showed me a sight I had never hoped to see, a woman speechless from gratitude!

Next morning Mr. Vigorous Daunt informed the distracted Grand Dukes of Eisslingen and Savony, who had called to see us at the Villa Spianola, that the Earl of Beaufort was a monstrous swindler whose crimes, he hoped, would shortly be expiated on the scaffold.

Within an hour thereafter we departed in a special train for Rome, on our way to Cairo, I disguised as a venerable serving man.

Some years have passed since then. I have reluctantly to record the fact that Edgar Vale is now a naturalised German subject, and that he principally resides in the castle of his wife's father, which is, I believe, situated somewhere adjacent to the town of Eisslingen. Vigorous Daunt has forbidden me to name him in his presence.

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